

SHREE BHAGVAT SINGHJEE
THE MAKER OF MODERN GONDAL



25th August, 1934
GONDAL

GOLDEN JUBILEE
COMMITTEE

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A GREAT RULER IN INDIA

Fifty years ago a Hindu youth of noble lineage and still nobler destiny took up the reins of government as Ruler of Gondal, a State of Bombay some 1,000 square miles in extent. To-day his grateful and devoted people begin to celebrate the Jubilee of a reign which, both by its record of achievement and by its length, has well deserved the epithet of Golden.

His Highness Maharaja Shree Bhagvat Singhjee, Thakore Sahib of Gondal, was born in 1865, and from his earliest years showed promise of those attributes which have since earned for him the title of "the selfless Ruler." In preparation for the arduous responsibilities he was one day to assume he applied himself, during his minority, with uncommon diligence to the acquisition of a sound and practical education, and soon proved to be of such scholarly ability that, according to an eminent authority, "in knowledge he stood head and shoulders above his fellows."

He was not yet 19 years of age when, by virtue of his extraordinary capability, he was installed as the administrative head of the State, yet he had already earned for himself a considerable reputation as author and scholar. In 1883 he made a tour of Europe, and his account entitled "The Journal of a Visit to England" was remarkable for the evidence it contained of a

capacity shrewdly to observe and rightly to appraise the various aspects of our Western civilisation.

By the time he was 21 his attainments had been recognised in striking fashion. He was made a Fellow of the University of Bombay in the year of his installation, and, two years later, took in the ordinary course, by examination, the degrees of M.B.C.M. and M.R.C.P. at Edinburgh University. Before the age of 30 he had been invested by Her Majesty Queen Victoria as Knight Commander of the Indian Empire, had added to his academic distinctions the degrees of Doctor of Laws (Edinburgh), Doctor of Civil Law (Oxford), Doctor of Medicine (Edinburgh), and Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, and had been made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. In his thirty-third year he received at the hands of Her Majesty at Balmoral the rank of Knight Grand Commander of the Indian Empire.

Of the personal attributes of the Maharaja Shree, as distinct from the scholastic attainments which have so aided him in his task of government, much has been written by the chroniclers of the period in this and other countries. They cannot, however, be illustrated better than by the transformation he has wrought in the condition of Gondal and its people.

It is given to few men of his country to enjoy so long a life, for the years between the fiftieth and sixtieth are the most critical with Hindus. Fewer still are able to pursue so active an existence and to practise with success the arts of statecraft for half a century. Rarest distinction of all, however, is to occupy, after such a period, the place that His Highness has in the hearts of his people—not all of whom are of his own race and religious persuasion. Let us see what good has been done in Gondal to earn such loyalty and affection for its Ruler.

Gondal is an inland State in the Kathiawar province of the Bombay Presidency. It depends for its income chiefly upon the yield of the soil, and the welfare of the agricultural community has been one of the main preoccupations of its Ruler since his assumption of office. In the course of his speech at the Installation Durbar in 1884 His Highness gave one pledge, among others, which has been amply fulfilled, and to which much of the subsequent prosperity of Gondal is attributable. He said: "It will be my earnest desire to see.....that the Kunbi enjoys the fruit of his labour."

A liberal policy of tax revision was instituted in order to lighten the burden of the Kunbis, or cultivators, who hitherto had laboured under financial and other handicaps of such a character that tillage of the land, though of paramount importance in the economy of the State, was an uphill and unpromising vocation. The peasants were indigent, ill housed and nourished, hampered by illiteracy and by the primitive nature of their equipment and environment. That they ever did raise crops betokened fortitude deserving of the help which the Maharaja Sahib gave them.

Possessed of the firm conviction that the future of Gondal was inseparably bound up with the prosperity of its peasantry the Maharaja Shree pursued a policy of light assessment which, during the half-century of his administration, has improved immeasurably the condition, the outlook and the hopes of this important section of the community.

More than fifty taxes were abolished, and a new system of assessment, obviating the hardships, complications and delays of the old, was introduced. Substantial amounts owing by subjects to the State in respect of debts incurred prior to his installation were remitted, and in 1909 even Customs duties were abolished.

These sacrifices of State revenue notwithstanding, Gondal's farsighted Ruler has been unstinting in the allocation of expenditure on public services and in the provision of means whereby the peasants might enjoy a broader, freer and less hazardous existence.

Insufficient rainfall and resultant failures of crops had many times reduced his people to a lamentable state of hopeless famine and despair. By lavish expenditure of both energy and money a vast system of irrigation was inaugurated. The State to-day has 7904 wells, against 2,250 in 1884, and two huge reservoirs. The Veri waterworks, besides irrigating 2,300 acres of land between the town of Gondal, capital of the State, and Moviya, eight miles away, supply drinking water to the capital. A sum of Rs. 6,51,000 was spent on the construction of the lake at Paneli, a village on the Gondal railway, and the canal, which is ten miles long, distributes water to 8,400 acres.

The results of this enlightened policy are everywhere apparent. Arable acreage increased from 2,26,550 in 1884 to 3,11,634 in 1934. The annual income of the State, which was less than 14 lacs of rupees when His Highness became Ruler, exceeded 79 lacs in 1934. Fifty years ago the cultivator, having despite all adverse circumstances raised his crop, struggled to convey the produce to market in primitive vehicles drawn with the greatest difficulty over crude and marshy tracks. The Maharaja Shree has built 300 miles of roads, 57 miles of municipal streets, innumerable culverts and bridges which place Gondal in an enviable position among native States in respect to transport routes.

Communication has been developed by the Maharaja Sahib of Gondal with the zeal of Cæsar. There is a network of railways, owned by the State, serving the more important parts of Gondal, and a well-organised telephone system links the villages.

Urban development in the State of Gondal has been carried out on a scale in every way compatible with the country's agricultural policy. Practically everything that can be devised to make the life of the inhabitants, of both towns and villages, safe, healthy and comfortable has been introduced, and even the casual observer must at once be impressed by the clean and orderly appearance of the streets, the number of stone-built houses in the villages and the handsome—often magnificent—structures erected for the service of the public. Many of the State and municipal buildings are competitive in architectural quality with the most modern edifices of a European capital.

Education and hygiene, as might be expected under a Ruler so distinguished in scholarship and medicine, have throughout the period of his administration been foremost in the Maharaja Thakore Sahib's schemes of development and reconstruction. He has done much to dispel the cloud of illiteracy which darkened the lives of the people, and has himself compiled a lexicon of the Gujarati language—a remarkable achievement for a Ruler who devotes so much of his time to the details of administrative work and to the personal welfare of his subjects. The latest feature of the Maharaja Shree's educational policy is the introduction of compulsory female education. The number of schools in the State has increased from 30 in 1884 to 191 in 1934 and scholars totalled 19,780 boys and girls out of a population of 2,05,846 in the latter year. When the Maharaja Shree Bhagvat Sinhjee became Ruler of Gondal only 2,168 boys and 332 girls, out of a population of more than 1,35,000 attended schools.

There is no space here to recount, even in the barest outline, the full tale of benefits and amenities introduced by this Ruler, who, having drunk deep at the wells of both Western and Oriental culture, pledged

himself to a programme of service which has turned out to be more comprehensive, more constructive and more fruitful than even he could have imagined fifty years ago.

Trade has prospered, poverty, disease and crime have ceased to be insoluble problems, and unemployment does not exist. Throughout the country are such modern urban features as electricity supply, waterworks, public parks, well-aligned asphalted roads, playgrounds, markets, hospitals and infirmaries; His Highness was the first to start a travelling dispensary, as he was also a pioneer in the development of railway enterprise. One of his most conspicuous achievements was the establishment of a boarding college for the sons of landowners—a class whose interests had hitherto run counter to those of the ruling chiefs.

In a State where such prosperity reigns there has been no change in the civil list expenditure for fifty years. The Maharaja Shree sets his face against personal and public extravagance, and exemplifies his policy by a frugal and unostentatious life, eschewing magnificence for himself and mixing freely and simply with his subjects. It is a remarkable fact, and one the more noteworthy to students of Eastern life, that the Maharaja Sahib of Gondal is more accessible than many a business man in the Western world; he will receive any of his people, rich or poor, and give them the benefit of his wisdom and sympathy. As for the racial problems that beset so often and so sorely administrators in the East, these have no incidence in Gondal, where Hindu and Mohamedan live together in harmony.

His own words addressed on one occasion to "fellow natives of Dhoraji," best summarise the personal qualities of the great Ruler in India. "Life" he said, "be it long or be it short, can have no

value for me unless I can be of some use to my people." It is this sentiment which has inspired and governed the administrative acts of a long and distinguished career; which, by the light it throws upon the spirit of the man himself, explains the reverence and affection of a people for its Prince; and which, no doubt, will make for Gondal and its Ruler a still more illustrious future.

GOLDEN JUBILEE COMMITTEE
GONDAL

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
LONDON



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CHAPTER I

First Impressions

1

It was a winter's day in London, clammy and cold. The air felt wet, as if water could be squeezed out of it.

The sky was ashen. For all one knew the sun had deserted the earth.

A few minutes before one o'clock I knocked at a door in Hampstead. The brass handle was sticky. A film of tarnish had settled upon it since it had been polished a few hours earlier.

The room into which I was ushered by a trim parlour maid in a black dress and stiff, snow-white cap and apron, was the study of the gentlemen upon whom I was calling. A log fire was blazing in the grate. The electric bulbs were aglow, giving a mellow light to an apartment that otherwise would have been semi-dark at mid-day.

Hardly was I seated when my host entered and shook hands with me. The warmth he put into his grip was a challenge to the cold to do its worst.

We knew each other only by repute. The gulf of race yawned between us. He was English. I was an Indian. Our temperaments, nevertheless, seemed to have been fashioned from the same materials.

Each of us was somewhat of a Bedouin. My wanderings had perhaps taken me farther afield than his. In his case, as in mine, the cash for the journeying had come through plying the pen.

My newly-found friend had returned a few weeks earlier from a lengthy tour in India. A wave of unrest had swept across my motherland in the wake of the Nipponese victories over Russia in Manchuria and the Tshushima Straits! It had gravely disturbed the rulers—his people. An editor in London and another in an industrial centre that annually reaped a golden harvest from India had jointly sent him to Bombay with a roving commission to learn all he could regarding the agencies that had warmed up a temper till then famed for being equable.

A better choice could not have been made. The English journalist had the "nose for news," as we of the craft say. His eyes and ears pierced into a situation like so many gimlets.

But behind the gimlets there was a soul. He was a man of perception, feeling and imagination, possessing great gifts of sympathy.

The discovery that India's aspirations ran, in some cases, counter to the interests of his own people had not soured him. It certainly had not impelled him to malign Indians.

Soon we found ourselves talking of the places he had visited and of the men and women he had met, many of them my countrymen and countrywomen. He had disdained to be piloted about and thereby must have offended the officials, mostly his people, who would have liked to take him in tow.

He made his own itinerary. While not avoiding the high lights of the situation, he had nowhere missed the shadows.

When the conversation turned to the "Ruling Princes" as he called them, I was particularly struck with his power of penetration. He told me of an Indian Ruler (whose territory was only one thousand square miles in extent and inhabited by about 2,05,846 persons), who wholeheartedly devoted himself to promoting the interests of his people. The administration of that State was efficient and progressive, yet economical. He advised me to meet this Raja when I next visited my motherland, which I was to do sooner than he or I anticipated at the moment.

2

I thus first came to hear of the Thakore Sahib of Gondal—His Highness Shree Bhagvat Sinhjee. Our actual meeting took place a few months later. It happened in this wise:

Towards the end of 1910 my wife and I were staying at "The sands," Versova—a small settlement delightfully situated on the verge of the Bay of Bombay. Practically all the timber used in the building had been taken out of a boat that had ceased to be seaworthy. Long and narrow with verandahs all around it, it reminded one of a ship sailing on an even keel in calm waters.

Mr. Homi M. Dadina, who had built it, was an engineer engaged in the import of cotton textile machinery from Lancashire, where he had learned his "trade." His father-in-law, Dadabhai Naoroji—India's "Grand Old Man"—lived with him, having recently retired from active life, largely spent in England in furtherance of Indian causes.

Every afternoon the dear old man used to go out in a horse-drawn brougham for "passive exercise," as he put it, and frequently invited me to accompany him. In the evenings we would sit in long

arm-chairs in the yard in front of the house. As the tide rose higher and higher the waves would creep in almost to our feet.

Dadabhai's mind would wander back over the scenes of his activities. He would relate incidents in his incisive, even-tempered style, now and again enlivened with a flash of humour.

He had, during his long career, come to know many "Ruling Princes." High in the list of those he esteemed was Bhagvat Sinhjee, whom he wished me to meet before I returned to Europe, as I intended doing in a few months; and out of the goodness of his heart he offered to give me an introduction to him.

Not many weeks later Mrs. St. Nihal Singh and I accompanied His Highness the Maharaja Shree Sayaji Rao Gaekwar on a tour to his territories in Kathiawar. This small peninsula juts out from Gujarat into the Arabian Sea. It is believed to have been, in remote times, an island separated from the mainland by a narrow strip of water which was filled up, in remote times, with silt brought down by the Indus and Narbada. As we were returning to Baroda I asked to be excused for a few days so that we might run up to Gondal and make the acquaintance of its Ruler.

3

The railway train deposited us at the Gondal station rather late in the afternoon. We were driven in a State coach to the Guest House.

Hardly had we taken a refreshing bath when we were informed that a carriage was waiting to convey us to the "Huzur Bungalow." That phrase struck me as odd. Never before had I heard the word "bungalow" used in connection with a Raja's residence. Why not? I wondered.

A single glimpse of the house in which His Highness dwelt with his family set at rest all questioning. It did not look like a palace at all. It was neither an imitation of a famous feudal castle or a Continental chateau, nor had some Western or Westernised architect been permitted to ornament it with a multitude of domes, minarets, spires and decorative gimeracks that, at least in his estimation, made it look like an Eastern structure.

The "Huzur Bungalow" was plain almost to the point of being severe. It had, in fact, been built in the seventies of the last century to serve as the residence of a British officer appointed by the Government of Bombay to administer the State during the minority of the present Ruler.

As the carriage drew up under the *porte cochere* a gentleman stepped out on to the verandah. He was dressed in white muslin. His pyjamas were almost skin-tight from the knee down. The shirt was worn loose over them instead of being tucked under them at the waist in Western style. His bare feet were thrust into patent-leather slippers.

After warmly shaking hands with us he escorted us into the drawing room where three ladies were sitting—Her Highness the Rani Shree Nandkunverba Sahiba, the Rajkumari (Princess) Shree Bakunverba Sahiba and the Rajkumari Shree Leilaba Sahiba. We found them shy but not unfriendly and soon were chatting with them.

The gentleman who had welcomed us did not tell us who he was. Nor did any one else. We were naturally curious, especially since he was up and down and in and out of the room, appearing to be very much at home.

Might he be His Highness' private secretary or an *aide-de-camp*? We wondered. Long training had made us cautious about jumping to conclusions regarding persons we met. It had taught us especially not to judge a man's status by the clothes he wore.

Tea was brought. It was a regulation, four-o'clock affair—thin bread and butter, sandwiches, cakes, and chocolates. There were, besides, little dishes of salty savouries and Indian sweets. They delighted me particularly. The mysterious gentleman assisted in passing around the food and took some himself.

We thought it strange that the Thakore Sahib had not put in an appearance when he had specially invited us. We concluded that some urgent business must have detained him.

When tea was half over, some chance remark revealed to us the fact that the person about whose identity we had been puzzled was none other than His Highness himself. We tried not to betray surprise by word or look. Did we, despite all our efforts? It may have been only our self-esteem: but we felt like thanking the god of things as they ought to be for protecting us from committing a *faux pas*.

The interior of the "Huzur Bungalow," judging by what we could see, was as unostentatious as its exterior. The drawing-room was a large, light, high-roofed, oblong apartment. A soft, neutral-tinted carpet covered the floor. Small tables and cabinets held silver and gold trinkets and trophies, tiny images of gods and goddesses, souvenirs of foreign travel and gracefully shaped vases filled with flowers. Chairs and divans stood near one another, giving the room a "homey" atmosphere.

There were a few specimens of the artistic handiwork, in the form of oil or water-colour paintings or statuary, executed by the daughters of the

house. The Rani Sahiba and the Rajkumaris had learnt painting from an English woman artist who had paid a long visit to Gondal some years earlier.

Their forms were draped in soft-shaded, gold-broidered *saris*. One end of the garment formed a skirt. Its fulness was tucked in at the waist. The other end was drawn over the head and fell in graceful folds over the shoulder, disclosing a somewhat low-necked, short-sleeved, tight-fitting jacket. Their feet were bare.

Stray silver threads streaked Her Highness' coal black hair. Her complexion was a rich olive, her features gave an impression of culture plus strength of character. Her forehead sloped gently back from finely arched eyebrows. Her eyes were soft, melting brown. Her cheeks showed few marks of suffering, despite the fact, as I afterwards learnt, that at one time she had been a confirmed invalid and had almost been snatched from Yama's clutches.

The younger daughter resembled her mother in looks, while the elder was more like her father. In keeping with her slender figure Bakunverba had a small face lit up by luminous black eyes.

With difficulty I managed to extract the information that the Rajkumaris preferred modelling in clay to any other form of art. They had made life-like busts of their father and mother and had modelled other objects. Some of them had been exhibited and had won prizes and certificates of merit.

There was another daughter, the Rajkumari Shree Taraba Sahiba, I was told. She was in Europe, attending school.

The Heir-Apparent, the Yuvaraja Shree Bhojraj-
jee, had completed his studies at Eton and Oxford. On his return home he had been married to a Rajput Princess—a younger sister of Her Highness the Maharani of Mysore. He had been put through a

course of training in all the departments of State to fit him to rule when, in due course, he ascended the throne.

There were three other sons—Kumar Shree Bhupat Sinhjee, Kumar Shree Kirit Sinhjee and Kumar Shree Nutver Sinhjee—all studying in Britain. It was the Thakore Sahib's intention to place them in such administrative positions as their education might fit them to occupy. Exceedingly hard-working himself, he could never resign himself to the idea of any member of his family eating the bread of idleness.

It appeared from the conversation supplemented with information later obtained from other sources that Her Highness' act in stepping out from behind the *pardah* had constituted a veritable social revolution. The Thakore Sahib had imbibed advanced ideas from his Western tutors at the Rajkumar College at Rajkot and from his extended tours in Europe. She realized that unless she fitted herself to be a true companion to him she would not be able to maintain the place she wished to in his affections.

While she was wavering, she fell seriously ill. The doctors called in advised her to go abroad for treatment. She cast aside the veil and in so doing set an example to her Rajput and other Indian sisters.

She did more than come out of *pardah*. She applied herself as assiduously as her health would permit to studies in Gujarati, the principal language of the Kathiawar peninsula, and in Sanskrit and English. She was determined to become well enough educated to be a pleasant and helpful companion to her liege lord; and endeavoured in every way to keep pace with him in his progress.

When the sun was near setting, slightly suffusing the sky with a pale pink flush delicately painted against

an azure background flecked with fleecy clouds like angels' wings, a large coach, drawn by prancing steeds, was driven up under the *porte cochere*. The Thakore Sahib asked us if we would like to see something of the town and its environs. Of course we were most anxious to do so.

Mrs. St. Nihal Singh was invited to enter the carriage. She took her place at the far end of the long seat facing forward. The Rani Sabiba followed her and then the Rajkumaris.

I stepped back to permit His Highness, who was still simply dressed as he had been on my arrival, to enter: but courteous man that he was, he refused to do so. He not only made me precede him but insisted that I sit facing forward while he himself rode with his back to the horses.

First of all we drove a couple of miles towards the Veri Lake, from which the city drew its supply of water. We strolled for a time on the dam flung across the river to impound water for the huge artificial lake, enjoying the cool breeze. Mango, citrus and other fruit trees had been planted below the reservoir and, through seepage, were thriving.

Just as the grim goblin of night was swallowing the worn-out day, the carriage stopped in front of a small temple. The Ruler alighted and helped the Rani and the Rajkumaris to the ground.

Asking to be excused for a few minutes, they proceeded to the outer yard of the shrine. There they divested themselves of their slippers and walked barefooted past the *nandi* (sacred bull) carved in stone, that faced the image inside the temple. Arriving at the holy of holies they reverently offered prayers to their deity.

Ashapura ("the fulfiller of desires") to whom the temple was dedicated, was the *isht devata* (the guardian

goddess) of the clan to which the Thakore Sahib belonged. Other members of the Jadeja clan—among them rulers in their own right and name over large and small States, I was told, repaired to this shrine for worship, sometimes making a special pilgrimage to it.

7

We reached the "Huzur Bungalow" about nine-o'clock and were informed that we were expected to dine there instead of going back to the Guest House for dinner. We gathered about the round table in the dining room furnished in faultless English style.

A French *cordon bleu* could hardly have turned out more delicious courses than those prepared by the Indian cooks in the Palace kitchen who had never left the shores of their—and my—homeland. Towards the middle of the meal several Indian dishes were served.

Her Highness ate no meat. She was, I was given to understand, a strict vegetarian. None of the family indulged in wine, spirits or liqueurs.

At the dinner table the Rani Sahiba remarked that one of her serving maids was being married that night. Probably Mrs. Singh had never attended a Hindu wedding and might be interested in seeing the ceremony. We all got into the family carriage again and were driven to the home of the bride's parents in a village close by.

We found it just an ordinary mud-walled house. Relations, caste-fellows and friends gathered there for the occasion and were singing marriage songs and making merry.

The Thakore Sahib, the Rani and the Rajkumaris mixed with the crowd with *bonhomie* that would have delighted the heart of the most democratic of western democrats. There was no suggestion of condescension upon their part.

8

Next day I discovered that the Ruler administered his State without the help and advice of any institution even remotely resembling a Parliament. He did not have a single *aide-de-camp*. He had a secretary but seldom used him for personal correspondence.

His eldest daughter was truly his shadow. She assisted him in his office work. She took turns with him at the wheel in the motor car. She superintended the work in the garden.

She was, at the time, interested in breeding Shetland ponies. A portion of the Palace stables had been turned into a stud for her.

Late in the afternoon on the second day of our visit we went there to see her ponies and she took us out in a small carriage, herself driving a team of diminutive steeds tandem fashion. So interested had we been in talk that none of us noticed that the light was rapidly failing. We were suddenly brought to a sense of reality by a policeman on point duty shouting: "Light up your lamps!"

He did not use any honorifics to soften his command, as one might have expected from an Indian police constable addressing royalty. He treated the Ruler and the Rajkumari as if they were ordinary citizens who had failed to obey the law.

I learnt subsequently that far from punishing the policeman, His Highness promoted him for doing his duty in an embarrassing circumstance. He did not consider himself to be above the law. If he, the law-maker, did not respect the regulations bearing his imprimatur he could not expect any one else to do so.

9

The few days we spent in Gondal were crowded. We visited institutions, most of them in His

Highness' company. The college at which sons of his *bhayats* (kinsmen) and *grasias* (landlords) were being educated specially interested us. So did the girls' school, where the pupils performed the *garba*, that resembled the may-pole dance of the west. The hospital, though small, was well equipped, as was to be expected from a Ruler who had earned, by hard work, the Doctor's degree from the Edinburgh University and the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians in the Scottish capital.

The streets were well paved and clean. Beggars did not flaunt their infirmities to excite the charitable instinct in the passer-by. The indigent were cared for in an institution set up at the edge of the capital across the river that had been regulated, at great expense, to avert the menace of flood to the capital.

One afternoon His Highness drove into the country-side. The moment we crossed the frontier we knew that we had left Gondal.

The good road had ended. There was a bump practically every yard we traversed. My wife might have felt nervous had not the Thakore Sahib—a lover of horses from his boyhood upward and an expert driver—been handling the reins.

On the way back to town we passed a farm where the juice was being pressed from sugar-cane and boiled down into *jaggery* or *gur*—soft brown sugar. We watched the process while the Thakore Sahib related to us, with much humour, how an experiment made by him in the early years of his rule to improve that process had miscarried. At his back an attendant was handing some coins to the farmer in payment of the liquid we had consumed.

CHAPTER II

Heritage

I

Kathiawar has rung for centuries with echoes of Shree Krishna's deeds. Here the great Hindu god, descended from *Indu* or *Chandrama* (the moon), retired after crushing the *daityas* (demons) that harassed the people inhabiting the region lying along the banks of the holy Jamna round about Muthura (*Anglice* Muttra) and Brindaban.

Rajputs (literally "the kings' sons") belonging to several clans claim descent from Shree Krishna and are known as *Chandraramai* or *Yadavas* (of the lunar race). Many of the ruling dynasties in Kathiawar are sprung from that stock.

One hundred and twenty-fourth in descent from Shree Krishna was a mighty warrior, Shree Kumbhoji, born in the middle of the seventeenth century. The lean prospects that lay before a younger son of the Ruling House at Rajkot did not satisfy him. At the head of a few trusty clansmen he marched to the south and west, conquering every obstacle he met and securing the ready submission of the people dwelling in the villages he brought under his sway.

This warrior's great-grandson outshone him. Named after him, he is known as "*Bha*" (or "father") Kumbhoji, to distinguish him from the founder of the House.

Even before ascending the throne in 1753 he, as the right-hand man of his father, the Thakore Sahib Haloji, had extended the boundaries of the State. After his succession he might have stretched his territory to the Arabian Sea but for the resistance organized by Amarji, the resourceful Nagar *Dewan* (Prime Minister) of the Muslim Nawab of Junagadh.

During the later years of his life he concentrated his attention upon consolidating the gains he had made. He stationed at the outposts barons who could deal swiftly with invaders. The men who thus helped him to make his dominions safe against aggression might have proved troublesome had they been permitted to live in idleness in the capital.

Internal peace was safeguarded by strengthening the ramparts enclosing a village. Guards were posted in each *kotha* (guard house) built over the gate leading into the settlement, ready to grapple with any intruder who might dare to disturb the rural peace.

Kumbhoji was as great a statesman as he was a tactician. To keep himself informed as to what was happening in the remotest corners of his territory he used to steal out of his fort, clad in the coarse home-spun worn by the *kheduts* (peasants).

One day as he was returning after such an excursion he came upon a cultivator driving a cart loaded with household and personal effects. Evidently the fellow was removing from one place to another.

It had been raining for days and the road was deeply rutted. The wheels of the heavy cart had sunk in the mud up to the hubs. Hard though the oxen pulled, it would not move.

The peasant, not recognizing the Thakore Sahib, asked him for help. Without hesitating Kumbhoji lent him a hand. Stooping, he exerted his immense strength and lifted the cart out of the mire.

As the two sat side by side resting after their exertions, the Thakore Sahib wished to know where the fellow was going. The man broke out into a frenzy of imprecations. He cursed Gondal and everybody connected with it. Finding his neighbours troublesome and the officials rapacious, he was shifting to another State where he expected to be treated more justly.

Kumbhoji judged, from his appearance, that he was thrifty, hard-working, honest and manly—just the sort of subject he liked to have—and felt loath to lose him. He therefore tried to turn aside his wrath with soft words and to persuade him to go back to his old home.

But the man was thoroughly soured. He would not be dissuaded.

Finally, losing patience Kumbhoji exclaimed:

“Very well, go. The next time your cart gets stuck in the mud, see if the Raja of your new State will help you to lift it out.”

For the first time the peasant realized who his helper really was and with whom he had been permitted to converse as an equal. Contrite, he turned his oxen back towards the village he had been quitting. Soon afterwards all his wrongs were redressed.

On another occasion Kumbhoji noticed that a cultivator who was conveying the State share of his produce to the official store-house was driving a yoke of very emaciated oxen. Calling him to his side he asked why he had permitted his bullocks to get into such a decrepit condition.

The farmer replied that he was so poor that he could not properly feed his wife and children, let alone the oxen. The Thakore Sahib sent him home

with the injunction not to come again until he could come in a cart drawn by a yoke of oxen as strong as those of his neighbours.

The officials were aghast. They had never heard of revenue being remitted on such grounds.

The Ruler, noticing their consternation, explained to them that his strength lay in the prosperity of his subjects. With strong, well-fed animals, the farmer would be able to grow larger crops and the treasury, in the long run, would benefit through the increased share of the grain it would receive.

The prophecy came true to the letter. The cultivator returned, three years later, with bullocks and produce that amazed the officers.

It is told of Kumbhoji that one day he came upon a Vaghari* woman with all her belongings on her head, going away from a village in the Dhoraji district. Apprehensive that she was in trouble, he asked her what was the matter.

She replied that she was a seller of *baral* tooth-brushes. Taking offence at something she had done, the *patel* (headman) of her village had ordered her to clear out.

The Thakore Sahib bade her return home. Sending for the *patel* he took him to task for having ill-treated the woman. It was no crime, he declared, for a woman to sell tooth-brushes. Her profession was humble, but she performed a necessary function in the village and, since she was a useful member of the community, she should be encouraged and helped, not oppressed and driven away.

3

Kumbhoji lived in a fort built on the right bank of a small stream—the *Sufra*—flowing through a fertile

* *Vaghari*—a hardy tribe, generally of nomadic disposition.

tract, alongside a small settlement—Dhoraji, now the largest town in Gondal. It served as his residence and also as the civil and military nerve-centre of his Principality.

"*Naxachauki*," they called the castle. *Nax* means "nine" and *chauki* "guards." To enter the fort one had to pass guards mounted at nine posts and nine times run the risk of being challenged and stopped.

The stream alongside which this castle stood has recently been diverted as a part of a costly scheme of town improvement. It is nevertheless possible to visualize the pretty sight that the round-bastioned pile must have made as it was reflected in the waters of the rivulet when it was full.

The principal chamber in the apartments occupied by the Raja was richly decorated by artists of those days. Every inch of the wall space was covered with mythological figures painted in yellow and black on a dark red background.

One of its windows to-day looks upon a lane leading from the riverside gate of the castle. On the left is a mosque used as a place of worship largely by Memons and Borahs—Muslims noted for their mercantile acumen and enterprise. The gods and goddesses of the Hindu Ruling Dynasty are enshrined within the fort, almost under the shadow of the minarets from which the *muezzin* calls, five times a day, upon the followers of the Prophet of Islam to pray.

4

In this place, on October 24, 1865, the subject of this memoir was born. Birth in such surroundings was of happy augury to one destined to rule over a population of diverse races and creeds.

The father of the boy—the Thakore Sahib Shree Sagramjee—was fifth in descent from the founder of the

Gondal House. He was a remarkable man. With the strength of a giant he combined the gentle spirit of a saint. Many stories are current illustrative of his kindness towards erring humanity.

It is related, for instance, that on one occasion a goldsmith was at work in the Palace making ornaments. The Rani Sahiba kept untiring watch over him lest he might steal some of the gold in which he was setting precious stones. Compelled to absent herself for a few minutes, she asked her husband to take her place and, knowing his indulgent nature, cautioned him to be on the alert.

The goldsmith was a shrewd man. Feeling sure that the Thakore Sahib would do nothing that would get him into trouble, he brazenly abstracted a lump of gold and secreted it about his person.

Upon her return the Rani Sahiba inquired if the goldsmith had been working "all right," while she was gone.

"Quite all right," was her husband's response.

The lady never learnt of the misdeed that had been committed in her absence. His Highness preferred to lose a little gold rather than injure the man by revealing his theft.

Sagramjee was persuaded, a few years after coming to the throne, to permit his son, the Rajkumar Shree Prithiraj, to govern the State in his name and leave him free to carry on his devotions without interruption. The arrangement suited a man of his disposition admirably.

Prithiraj was a typical Rajput of that day—high-spirited, fond of sports and interested in affairs of state. Judged by the standards of those times he had received a good education and was refined in his manners. His ambitious mother—Bai Shree Ramba had him affianced to three Kathiawar princesses belonging

to important ruling families. The triple wedding celebrated with great pomp, cost the State Rs. 4,50,000.

Unfortunately the arrangement could not last. First the Rani Sahiba, without whose manœuvring Prithiraj would never have become the *de facto* Ruler of the State, died. In 1864 the young man himself passed away without leaving issue.

Complications followed Prithiraj's death. Sagramjee found it necessary to go to Bombay to straighten out one of these tangles. While there he was taken suddenly ill and passed away on December 14, 1869.

5

As related earlier, a little less than four years prior to his death a son had been born to him. The mother of this Kumar was Shree Monghiba Sahiba, the daughter of Jhala Sartanjee of Minapur, whom Sagramjee had married after the Rani Ramba's death.

She was of a deeply religious nature, yet her feet were firmly planted upon the earth. Descended from a long line of warrior princes, she had been taught to regard the weal of the people as her weal—their woe as her woe.

She had an abiding faith in Vedantic philosophy, especially as it was expounded by Swami Narayana. This holy man had been born in Upper India, not far from Ayodhya, imperishably associated in the Hindu mind with Shree Ramachandra, believed to have been descended from Surya, (the Sun god). Orphaned before he had entered his teens, he wandered from one sacred place to another, learning Sanskrit and through it the various systems of philosophy evolved in India since the misty morn of civilization.

By the time he had made his way to Kathiawar he was advanced in life and acclaimed as a man of

great learning and piety. Followers flocked to him from northern and western India.

Almost to his dying day he spent the best part of the year travelling about the country preaching ethics and inspiring every one who heeded his words to lead a life of rectitude. The essence of the faith inculcated by this modern *rishí* (sage) was purity of conduct.

So strict were the rules governing the monastic order he founded that the monks were prohibited from having any dealings of whatever kind with any woman. They were not permitted to possess money even for religious or charitable purposes. They were obliged to beg for their food and to receive it in a wooden bowl, of which they were allowed to possess but one. All eatables were to be jumbled together and water was to be sprinkled upon them, so as to make them unpalatable.

As a follower of Swami Narayana, Bai Shree Monghiba led a simple life, even though she dwelt in a palace. She rigorously curtailed her needs and devoted herself to religious exercises and good deeds.

6

Her association with holy men had so broadened her intellectual horizon that her views particularly regarding women, were far in advance of her time. She thought that it was silly to look upon education as the exclusive privilege of men merely because they were the bread-winners of the family. As the mothers of the nation women, she felt, had an important function to fulfill in society and their minds should, therefore, be enlightened, if for no other purpose than to enable them to discharge their conjugal and maternal responsibilities.

She took keen interest in a school named after her established in Gondal in January 1858, for imparting instruction to girls. It was the first institution of its kind in the whole of Kathiawar which, as will be shown later, was particularly backward in educational matters.

Owing to the ignorance that prevailed it was feared that little use would be made of the facilities provided at the Shree Monghiba School, as it was named. Persons belonging to the genteel classes who might well have been expected to set the example, were indifferent towards education. They also believed in keeping their women "behind the curtain." The enlightened attitude of the first lady of the State however disarmed suspicion.

7

This Rani bore only two children, the Rajkumari Shree Majirajba, who, in conformity with the custom, was married at a tender age to the Thakore Sahib of Bhavnagar, and Shree Bhagvat Sinhjee. The name given to the boy reflected her deeply religious nature.

Shree Gunatitananda—a saint belonging to the order founded by Swami Narayana—suggested, at her request, "Bhagvat Prasad," meaning "Gift of God." It was altered to Bhagvat Sinhjee to suit dynastic requirements.

Sinha (lion) is used as a surname by many fighting clans in India. "*Jee*" serves as an honorific suffix.

Bhagvat Sinhjee inherited from his father physical endurance which enables him to put forth prodigious exertions even at an age regarded in India as old and his broad charity towards human frailties. He owes to his mother the financial genius, the love for extreme simplicity of living and the deep regard for all sentient creatures that have characterized him throughout his life.

CHAPTER III

Schooling

1

While serving in Kathiawar as the Agent of the Bombay Government, during the middle of the last century, Colonel R. H. Keatinge felt dissatisfied with the manner in which the young men destined to rule over states of greater or less importance were being brought up. The atmosphere pervading the palaces was far from healthy. The young men came in contact largely with sycophants and intriguers, some of whom sought to curry favour with them by deliberately leading them into evil ways. Their education was neglected, or, at best, the means employed were, in most cases, rudimentary.

Colonel Keatinge's mind reverted to the type of school in which he and his fellows had been educated. He believed that an institution modelled upon the public school in England would provide young rajas and their kinsmen with many advantages.

There the princes would learn enough of the art and sciences to enable them to occupy with distinction the positions of responsibility that many of them were destined to fill. They would come in contact with teachers drawn from the genteel classes of both Britain and India, who would not only give

them instruction that would broaden their mental horizon but would also induce them to cultivate polished manners. Emphasis would, moreover, be laid upon manly sports that would enable them to build up strong, healthy bodies, to acquire a spirit of fair play and to learn to do team work.

The Political Agent discussed his ideas with every ruler he happened to meet. Almost without exception they objected to the proposal: but in addition to the influence he possessed as the representative of a Government regarded as all-powerful, he was tactful and persuasive and managed, in time, to secure promises of financial help from some of them.

Shortly after his retirement the scheme fructified. His successor, Colonel W. W. Anderson, laid the foundation-stone of the Rajkumar College at Rajkot on April 28, 1868. A little more than two years later Sir Seymour Fitzgerald, the Governor of Bombay, opened the main building.

2

The ideals that the tutors at the College had set before themselves were expounded by one of them—Dr. F. G. Selby, M.A., LL.D., in a speech* he delivered while acting as the Principal. They were not aiming, he explained, "at creating *pandits*." They, on the contrary, were striving "to make boys intelligent and to give them a capacity for affairs—to give them the power to see and the will to do what is right."

The system employed at the Rajkumar College in promoting this object was "not one-sided." Intellectual and moral discipline was necessarily assigned the first place: but physical training was not neglected. The teachers knew "that health of body is necessary to

* Delivered at the Rajkumar Prize Exhibition on January 17, 1883, as reported in the *Bombay Herald* of January 20, 1883.

health of mind." They, moreover, realized "that a keen interest in out-door sports" was "one of the surest preventives of moral enervation."

The College authorities attached great importance to the *esprit de corps* that boys acquired in a residential school. "When men or boys begin to feel," Dr. Selby asserted, "that they are no longer isolated units, but that they are bound together by membership of one body, at once a standard of conduct is created to which every member of the body must conform." In that circumstance it became "bad form" to do certain things. Provided the standard of morality was high amongst them, what was "bad form" would coincide with what was morally bad.

The tutors sought to impress upon the students the seriousness of the task that would devolve upon them when they came into power. Upon their shoulders would be "laid heavier responsibilities than (upon) those of ordinary men." Every person must needs set a good example to his fellows: The rajas had to be all the more careful, for upon them depended the "moral and material welfare of the many thousands over whom they ruled." The teachers therefore earnestly entreated the future rulers of Indian States "to build up habits of industry and a strength of moral purpose" that would make it impossible for them to fail when they were "brought face to face with the trials and temptations of life."

The staff was "very favourably circumstanced" in preparing the young rajas and the rajas-to-be for their life-work. Great freedom was allowed to the teachers. They were not tied down to arbitrary rules or conventional standards. They could give free play to individual parts and the development of special talents.

In the matter of examinations, too, the College was better situated than other institutions affiliated to

any of the Indian Universities, then merely examining and not teaching bodies. The men who tested the intelligence of the Rajkumars had lived for years amongst them, could "talk to them in their own language," knew "the circumstances in which they" were brought up; the object at which the system aimed "and the standard to which it" was possible to attain. They above all tried to discover "not what the boys" did "not know but what they" did know.

3

It was easier to establish this College than to induce the rulers in Kathiawar and Gujarat to take advantage of it. They belonged to a class that was conservative to a degree. The idea of depriving the Yuvaraja (heir-apparent to a throne) or even a younger son, of personal care raised many misgivings in their parents' minds.

The ladies of practically all the princely houses in the peninsula particularly objected to it. They disliked the very idea of being parted from their sons. No outsider, however capable, could, they felt, be so solicitous for their welfare as they were themselves. The fear also haunted them that their sons, if sent to the College, might be induced to forswear the faith of their fathers and become Christians.

With the means of communication then existing Rajkot appeared to the ranis to be at the back of beyond. The railway had hardly pierced Kathiawar. Travelling had to be done on horse-back or by coach or palanquin and was slow and tedious.

4

Discussion of this nature went on in *Navlakha* Palace at Gondal, standing on the right bank of the Gondli river. It had been given that name because

it was supposed originally to have cost nine lakhs (Rs. 9,00,000)—a fortune in those days.

Here the little Thakore Sahib was being brought up by his widowed mother. The Rani Shree Monghiba Sahiba had not permitted him to be parted from her for even a day.

The arrangements she had made for his education left, in her opinion, nothing to be desired. They were, in fact, somewhat better than might have been expected. Head and heart therefore combined to resist the suggestion made to her to send her son to the College at Rajkot.

Captain A. M. Phillips, stationed by the Bombay Government at Gondal, was however determined that the boy should go there. The *Ma Sahiba* would deign to hold converse with him only from behind the curtain: but even despite that handicap he, by degrees, wore down her opposition and the boy proceeded to Rajkot in December, 1873.

Bhagvat Sinhjee was nine years of age at that time. His fond mother sent him with trusted servants to keep a watchful eye over him day and night—to guard him against all possible harm.

Commodious quarters were allotted to him in a block of the hostel which also housed two of his cousins and *bhayats*. Food was cooked and served in orthodox style by men specially chosen for the purpose.

The teachers found the Thakore Sahib to be unusually serious for his age. Books fascinated him while he was indifferent towards sports, exalted almost to the rank of a god at the College.

Teacher after teacher tried to interest him in cricket, but found that his heart was in his studies—not in the playing field. Time and again dissatisfaction in this respect found expression in the terminal progress reports.

"We only regret," Mr. Chester Macnaghten, the Principal, wrote, for instance, in 1879, "that he does not show more energy on the playground."*

The next (winter) term a similar complaint was made:

"He is too much inclined to be sedentary and physically inactive."

Mr. Macnaghten and his assistants failed to change him. They need not have worried however. Nature had endowed him with a strong physique and their fears that his health would break down under the strain of studies proved to be groundless.

6

Even before he went to College he had evinced a marked liking for languages. He particularly loved Gujarati and had readily taken to English. By steady efforts he acquired a considerable vocabulary in either language and took pains to pronounce his words correctly.

The course was heavy—especially for boys brought up in palaces. At fourteen he had to study English language and literature, including verse, history of England, astronomy, geometry, algebra, arithmetic and natural philosophy (elementary physics and chemistry) in addition to Gujarati. Difficulties were multiplied by the fact that the mother-tongue of the pupils was not employed as the medium of instruction. English was used for that purpose, even to the point of teaching Indian history and geography.

There were many examinations. The study of the English language, in itself, involved tests in reading, composition, grammar, history (of England and India), writing, dictation, recitation and geography.

* Extracts from the Reports of the Rajkumar College Examiners. p. 2.

in most of these subjects Bhagvat Sinhjee was marked "good" or "very good." In Gujarati his record was "excellent" or "very good."

The sciences, particularly mathematics, captured his interest. His mathematical papers were marked "excellent," sometimes "very excellent."

Drawing, too, attracted him. He would sit sketching by the hour while his fellows were at play. Before he left Rajkot he had acquired considerable skill and could illustrate his ideas pictorially with almost the ease with which he could express them in words. This ability was to be of great use to him in after-life.

He did not find the curriculum taxing. His ambition ran beyond the compulsory course. He avidly chose "additional subjects" and put honest work into them.

His promotion was rapid. In the winter of 1875 he was not only in a higher class than the one he, at his age, was expected to be in, but was actually at the head of it. In the following summer he was awarded a class prize—the first he had won.

Only once did he appear to slacken. "I regret" the Principal wrote in 1880, "that since his promotion" to the first class "his ardour in some subjects seems to have slackened." He was then in his fifteenth year.

This "slackening" was perhaps due to some ailment or anxiety of which Mr. Macnaghten knew nothing or could take no note. It was, in any case, only a temporary phase. The following term the report read:

"His natural capacity is very good, and his progress continues to be quite satisfactory. Next term he would be at the head of the College."

This expectation was fulfilled. A later report read: "General conduct: good. His progress in study is quite satisfactory, his knowledge of English being

especially good. He keeps his place very easily at the head of the College."

From that time forward he advanced so much ahead of the other students that he had to be "put in a class by himself."

So gratified was Mr. Macnaghten with Bhagvat Sinhjee's progress that he wrote to him in February, 1882:

"I know, too, that your attainments are such as to place you very easily at the head of the College."*

This opinion was shared by every officer who, at the instance of the Government, inspected the institution. Colonel J. W. Watson, President of the Rajasthanik Court (of which mention will be made later), for instance, reported in the same year that the Thakore Sahib,

"though nominally in the same class as the other two Rajkumars in this division, really occupies a position distinct from and far above them. He studies other and additional subjects and is far advanced beyond the others in every department of learning. Indeed he is a most promising student, by a long way the head of the College and with abilities quite above the common, so much so that feeling it a farce to give him marks, I have contented myself with recording his undoubted superiority."

At the exhibition held on January 20, 1883, for awarding prizes—the last the Thakore Sahib was to attend—Dr. Selby, then acting as Principal, paid this compliment to him:

"In knowledge he stands head and shoulders above his fellows. It is not a slight thing that

* From letter dated February 2, 1882, from Mr. Macnaghten to the Thakore Sahib.

he should know English well enough to converse freely with Englishmen and to read English books with ease and pleasure. In the matter of setting an example of good conduct to his companions he has done all that the head of this College and the heir to a great State should do." *

The "first-class prize" for 1882, the English-speaking prize and the Idar prize (presented by His Highness the Maharana of Idar) were awarded to him by Colonel James of the Prince of Wales' Own Grenadiers, who presided at the function.

The Thakore Sahib played the title-role in a playlet—a scene from the "Heir-at-law," composed by Mr. (afterwards Sir) T. Colman, (who rose to be a judge of the Bombay High Court) and performed at the Exhibition. The audience was highly pleased with the sincerity and power with which he portrayed Dr. Pangetoss. He also gave a recitation from Wordsworth, taking the character of the "Happy Warrior," rendering it "with wonderful memory, good pronunciation and just emphasis," to quote Colonel James.† The drama has continued to fascinate him.

7

All the time the Thakore Sahib was at College his mother was maturing plans for settling him in life. She felt that she was growing old and wished to dandle her son's children on her knees before she was gathered unto her forefathers.

She believed in plurality of wives for men who could support them. In that belief Bhagvat Sinhjee

* Quoted in representation sent by the Rani Shree Monghila to His Excellency the Right Honble Sir James Fergusson, Bart., B.C.M.G., C.I.E. the Governor and President in Council, Bombay, dated January 22, 1884.

† Report of the Rajkumar Prize Exhibition, in the *Bombay Gazette* of January 20, 1883.

had been betrothed to four maidens of her choice. One of them was a daughter of the Maharaja of Dharampur—an offshoot from the renowned Seesodia dynasty of Mewar (Udaipur) in Rajputana, claiming descent from Surya (the sun-god) and the oldest ruling family in the world. The second was a cousin of the Raja Sahib of Vankaner. The third was a daughter of Jhala Kallan Singh of Minapur (the Rani Sahib's brother); and the fourth a daughter of the Thakore Sahib of Chuda.

The Administrators tried to have the wedding postponed till Bhagvat Sinhjee had completed his education; but the Rani-Mother could not be moved from her purpose. She had her way in the end and the quadruple marriage was celebrated on June 2, 1881.

Rulers from the principal States in Kathiawar, kinsmen and friends from Gujarat, Rajputana and other parts of India, attended the ceremony. The function was organized on a lavish scale. The expenditure exceeded Rs. 2,50,000.

On January 8, 1883 the Dharampur Rani presented the Thakore Sahib with a son. There were great rejoicings throughout the State. The Yuvaraja was a little later named Rajkumar Shree Bhojrajjee.

CHAPTER IV

Early Ideas and Aspirations

1

Though by the end of 1882 Bhagvat Sinhjee had learnt all that the Rajkumar College could teach him, he was not deemed old enough to rule his State. It was therefore decided that he should visit Europe and see something of how other people lived and worked.

Foreign travel was far from popular with the people then. The view was, in fact, almost universally held by the Hindus that *mlechhas* (outcastes) dwelt beyond the *Kala-pani* (black water). To cross it constituted a cardinal sin. Most Muslims in Gondal also frowned upon young men proceeding abroad.

His mother disliked the suggestion: but she was too wise to oppose it. She knew, for one thing, that the British desired it and experience had taught her that what they desired they generally obtained. Her son's heart, too, was set upon it and she loved him too dearly to stand in his way. He had already developed a strong will-power and there was no thwarting him once he had made up his mind to execute a plan.

She therefore resolved to disregard her scruples and speed the preparations so that he may return to

her as early as possible. She went as far as Rajkot to bid farewell to her son. The parting was tearful.

It had been originally planned that Dr. Selby should accompany him to Europe. At the last minute, however, he was prevented from going. His place was taken by Major (afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel) G. E. Hancock, of the Political Department, who proved to be a pleasant companion and useful guide.

On the eve of his departure the *Kunvers* (scions of ruling houses) at the College gave a farewell dinner in his honour. The scene must have been affecting, for he wrote in the *Journal* that he had just begun to keep:

"I was much touched by the kindness shown to me by these old friends with whom I had lived for many years. I did not know till then that I had so strong a hold on their affection."*

2

This was Bhagvat Sinhjee's first journey outside Kathiawar. He indeed had seen little beyond Gondal and Rajkot.

He was captivated by the panorama that stretched before his eyes as the railway train sped towards Bombay. Gujarat, famed as India's garden, presented a gay appearance. He could not help comparing it with the bald, treeless plain with which he was familiar. "We were," he wrote on April 19th, "passing through a wide expanse of living verdure. Everything looked fresh and green in spite of the approach of hot weather."

Towards sundown that day he set eyes on the sea for the first time. He was driven up to Malabar

* All the references that follow in this chapter are from the *Journal of a Visit to England in 1882*, by Bhagvat Sinhjee Thakore Salih of Gondal. (Bombay, 1886).

Hill, commanding "a grand and beautiful view of the Bay and the city stretching from that hill to it." He was charmed with his first glimpse of "the *urbs prima in Indis*, as they call it." After further acquaintance he added that "the buildings were magnificent."

Not in everything did he find Bombay superior to Gondal. Neither the Victoria Gardens nor those at Parel (a suburb), for instance, seemed "so nice or fresh to" him as his own at Gondal.

He waxed ecstatic over a performance given by Wilson's Circus to which he was taken.

Electric light attracted him. The harnessing of that energy to serve man's need opened up endless possibilities before him. "Some day," he declared, "I should like to have it in my new palace at Gondal." Electricity has been installed but this "new palace" remained a dream, as will appear from a later chapter.

3

His outlook, even at that stage, was distinctly utilitarian. After he had been a day or two in Bombay it was very easy to see that he enjoyed sight-seeing only as a relish and not as the *pièce de résistance*.

Institutions of public utility especially appealed to him. He went to the Vehar and Tulsi Lakes, from which people in Bombay obtained drinking water. He found them beautiful and admired very much the "skill and energy" behind that enterprise.

They set him thinking about his own State, "I have long desired to supply Gondal in a similar way with water to be brought through pipes from some place higher up the Gondli River," he confided to paper. As we shall see, he set engineers to work out a scheme and it was carried out in 1900.

Attendance at a band performance on the Apollo Bunder made him resolve to have a trained band at Gondal to "cater for the amusement of the people on certain days by discoursing English as well as native* music more familiar to their ear." This intention, too, was fulfilled soon after.

A visit to the Zoo depressed him. He had inherited from his parents a regard for animals so tender that it made him unhappy to see beasts and birds in captivity. He wrote:

"The animals in the Victoria Gardens looked very miserable, and were suffering from heat and dust."

To mitigate their sufferings he suggested that "the ground all round their cages should be watered frequently" and the cages should be swept with greater care.

A visit to the mint gave him visual proof of the advantage resulting from the "division of labour."

Inspection of the *Times of India* printing presses made him realize how great a boon that invention had been. If he wished "a Sanskrit manuscript of moderate size copied," he wrote, "the amanuensis at Gondal would charge five or six rupees for a copy." But "the same *Ms.*" could be "put in the hands of a competent printer" and after it had been set, several copies of it could be struck "in no time, the cost of each copy not probably exceeding eight annas."

Economy, which was to be the key-note of his administrative policy, already interested him.

4

The voyage to England proved uneventful. He met on board the ship Syed Mahomed, a judge of the High

* This word has since been brought into disrepute by persons of Occidental origin who have used it in a derogatory sense when speaking of Asiatics and Africans.

Court in Bengal. He was so impressed with his personality that he arranged to meet him again in London.

At every point the steamer touched he went ashore to see the sights. His *Journal* shows keen power of observation.

He arrived in London on May 21st. He found that the railway trains there ran "much faster than in India." He was even more surprised to see people doing their own work instead of depending upon servants. He almost could see "business" stamped upon everybody's face.

If the Londoners interested him, he was equally interesting to them. They noticed his dress. It was "a novelty to most of them." He could not "exactly make out whether their smiles indicated "approval or disapproval." He would have been amused "to hear their criticism" of it.

He visited the India Office and other departmental buildings, the Houses of Parliament, hospitals, museums, libraries, reading-rooms, clubs, parks and recreation grounds and theatres. He attended levees and social functions.

In so doing he never seems to have forgotten that a serious purpose lay behind his travels. He could not regard himself as a private individual spending his own money. He felt that the taxes paid by his people made it possible for him to be in Europe and therefore he must try to serve as their eyes and ears. He especially sought to discover for himself the secrets that had made the British a great nation so that he could apply them to improve Gondal and its inhabitants.

5

"The great characteristic of the English nation," he set down in his *Journal*, "is that whenever the

welfare of their people is concerned they will turn out to a man and give their minds to the development of such resources and industries as are most conducive to the support of a constantly growing population." This remark had been provoked by an exhibition of apparatus for saving life at sea that he had visited on May 24th.

The British capacity for personal and collective discipline and for systematizing life and work made a deep impression upon him. He marvelled, for instance, at the efficiency of the British Post Office.

Mr. Henry Fawcett—the blind M. P.—who then administered that Department, appeared to him to be "wonderfully clever." His marvellous memory enabled him to deal with figures with greater accuracy "than any of the experts in the full enjoyment of their organ of sight."

6

The Zoo in London was as revolting to him as the (much smaller) one in Bombay had been. He questioned the propriety of confining beasts and birds of the jungle for the personal pleasure of human beings. How could man, who "calls himself the lover of liberty," he asked, "restrain the freedom of the lower creatures simply for his own amusement?" He doubted that any justification could be found for "encaging pretty birds of the forest."

He was critical of the treatment accorded to lost dogs in "homes" for such animals in London. The one to which he was taken "was in shamefully bad order." "Most of the dogs looked very miserable." A charitable institution of this kind, he thought, ought to be kept in a better condition and closely supervised.

Some of the dogs were "really handsome and high-bred;" but they lost "their virtue and beauty in no time under the shabby treatment" they received in the "Home."

Dogs could be had very cheap in this place. He however refrained from purchasing one lest it might have contracted some disease during its enforced confinement.

He compared the careless treatment of the inmates of this establishment with the care bestowed upon the canine exhibits he had seen a short time earlier at the Crystal Palace. "Dogs are much better attended to at shows and other places, where there is some profit to be made from them," he declared.

The money value of fancy dogs amazed him. One he saw at the Crystal Palace "was actually priced at £10,000."

Being "very fond of dogs," he wished to buy one, but was "not certain whether the mastiff could be acclimatized in India."

He was sorry that dogs were neglected in India. That could not have been the case in the olden days, for a dog's "services were appreciated even by the gods of Hindu mythology."

Stories told of the St. Bernardine dogs aiding travellers lost in the Alps made him assert:

"Indian dogs are quite capable of being perfectly trained. The watch-dogs of the Binjarees and the Tibetan dogs are the indigenous breeds of the country, and they render yeoman service to their masters, so it would cause no surprise if animals that are now considered as mere outcasts turned out to be very useful...Gradually they might be made to replace the greyhounds, boar-hounds or bull-terriers which are now employed in pulling down game."

His mind was, it will be seen, busy contriving ways and means to make use of indigenous in place

of foreign, material, even though such replacement involved some trouble.

If he disapproved of the way dogs were treated in the English "Home," he liked still less the sight he witnessed at one of the "places of interest" to which he was taken while in Naples. It was known as the Dog's Grotto, and was situated at some distance from Virgil's tomb. It contained an "abundance of carbonic acid gas at the bottom of it. A small dog was led into it and kept there for half a minute and immediately became asphyxiated." Though it soon revived in the open air, it appeared to him to be "a cruel experiment."

He was hardly less critical of the methods employed at the Botanical Gardens at Kew to make exotic plants grow in a soil and climate utterly unsuited to them. "The artificial means used in rearing a plant of foreign clime and ripening its fruits by force and torture" did not commend themselves to him. It may be an achievement from the scientific stand-point: but

"For all that it is not natural. Nature and Art have, I think, their own functions assigned to them. They preserve their charms as long as they keep a reasonable distance from each other. Nature, I am afraid, will lose her attractions if Art is allowed to encroach upon her sacred precincts. But during my short sojourn in London and its environs I have observed that it is the general desire to imitate Nature so far as may be by artificial processes. The hot-houses at Kew are a good illustration."

Nor did he hesitate to condemn shooting deer at close range and massacring *en masse* "poor creatures who let you go so near them and expect no harm from you." Such "sport" forcibly reminded him of

the touching appeal addressed to King Dushyant by the Hermit in *Shakuntala*, who pleaded:

"Now heaven forbid this barbed shaft descend
Upon the fragile body of a fawn,
Like fire upon a heap of tender flowers!
Can thy steel bolts no meeter quarry find
Than the warm life-blood of a harmless deer?
Restore, great prince, thy weapon to its quiver
More it becomes thy arms to shield the weak
Than to bring anguish on the innocent."

He detested the "wanton practice of shooting pigeons, parrots and other innocent creatures." He was sad that some Europeans had introduced pigeon shooting into India "as a sort of pastime."

7

They found their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales (later Their Majesties the King-Emperor Edward VII. and the Queen-Empress Alexandra) exceedingly gracious. He was equally charmed with Her Imperial Majesty the Queen-Empress Victoria when he had the honour of being presented to her.

He had expected to see Her Majesty quite a different looking personage. The photographs he had seen certainly did not "flatter her." She had an "exceedingly kind face" and was "smaller than most English ladies." She made it a point to inquire about his personal affairs. "I was altogether very much gratified with the reception I met with," he remarked and was sure that his relations would be happy "to hear of it in India."

8

His mind frequently flitted back to his own country. When he went on a boating excursion in which he tried to row for the first time, he reflected

that in India that sort of thing "would be considered derogatory for a Chief" to engage in. He found it "a very pleasant exercise."

A cricket match he witnessed on June 28th made him think that the game was only

"...a new edition of the 'stick and ball,' which was a very favourite game in India in remote antiquity, and in which the renowned Krishna and his playmates are said to have taken a great delight. The said game, though in somewhat altered form, is played by the boys in most parts of India even at this day. But the rules and system are not so perfect as in cricket. The beauty of all Indian games, however, is that they give ample exercise to the limbs without costing much. They are remarkably cheap as compared to the English games, both out-door and in-door, which are enormously expensive with all their paraphernalia. The game of billiards, for instance, must tax the purse to the tune of at least one thousand rupees, thus debarring common folks from indulging in it. It is a pity that old Indian games are rapidly dying out."

9

A visit to a couple of famous markets set him thinking about Indo-British relations. He noticed that the British had adopted the Indian word *bazar* in a slightly altered form ("bazaar") for some of their marts. He expressed the hope that they would have a greater liking for Indians than they had for Indian languages. He felt that India's day of happiness would not come until they had that liking.

"The rulers and the ruled seem to live together," he remarked, "like oil and water, without wasting

much sympathy on each other's part." This fact he considered, was "very much to be deplored."

One of the best remedies that suggested itself to him was that "the rulers should feel with the people, that they should throw off their reserve, and instead of standing aloof mix with them more freely than heretofore." The beginning, he thought, "should be made by the rulers." From his knowledge of his countrymen he would "assure any pessimist that" such effort would "be met half way."

He thought that the British form of Government was, in some ways, akin to the system of Administration that prevailed in ancient India. It will however be more appropriate to discuss that matter in a subsequent chapter.

10

Upon suddenly coming face to face with the Thakore Sahib of Wadhwan—Shree Dajiraj—who had been with him at College, a wave of nostalgia swept over him. He wrote in his *Journal* that night:

"In a foreign country where one finds strangers all around one feels intense delight in meeting a fellow-countryman. That fellow-countryman may be perfectly unknown to him. But there is always something in the similarity of language, manners, dress, or even the very mode of thinking that draws their minds towards each other. I think it is the result of mutual sympathy which is indefinable in its nature."

From London he went to Cambridge where the Rajkumar Harbhamji, a brother of the Thakore Sahib of Morvi, was studying. The two were delighted to meet each other.

The appearance of Cambridge pleased him. Never had he seen "such fine avenues of trees."

On the whole, however, he "was not impressed with" the place, perhaps because it was "surrounded by the mathematical atmosphere which was too hard" for his "lungs to breathe." That remark is somewhat difficult to understand. While at Rajkot he had studied mathematics with great avidity.

He liked Oxford better. His visit coincided with a ceremony held for conferring honorary degrees on certain distinguished persons.

To his great surprise he found the Chancellor being "constantly interrupted in his opening speech by the students, who shouted all sorts of things from the gallery." Though "some of their remarks were rather witty and made everybody laugh," he could not but deplore their taste. Their behaviour ran counter to all the traditions he had inherited.

Since Vedic times the *guru* (teacher) had been venerated in India as if he were semi-divine. Even when king's sons went to the forest hermitages of the *rishis*, they carried firewood over their shoulders—emblematic of begging admission into the *ashrama* (institution).

No wonder that he "could not help thinking that the conduct of the Oxford undergraduates was, to say the least, not student-like." He felt sure that "such turbulent behaviour of disciples towards their preceptors would be past all belief in India, where something like divine respect is paid to the *Gurus* by the pupils."

Dr. Mackby, with whom he passed an evening at Headington Hill, where he had "a pretty house and gardens," advised him to return to Oxford some day "and be attached for some time to one of the Colleges to complete" his education. He did not dream, at that time, that a few years later he would receive the Doctorate in Civil Law *in causa honoris* from that University.

He fell in love with Scotland at first sight. Edinburgh, with its grey granite buildings and broad, well-kept streets, particularly appealed to him. "Nature and Art had combined to make it as charming as possible." He appreciated its quiet and its "atmosphere of learning."

A tour of the Royal Infirmary and of the medical schools attached to the Edinburgh University made him wish to study medicine. He had "a taste for that subject." A few years later he had the satisfaction of obtaining the highest degree in medicine in the gift of that University.

He was struck with the "patience and kindness" shown to the inmates in the asylum for the blind and the quality of the food given to them. It would be a good thing, he opined, if work in this direction were attempted in India, where blindness was even more common than in Europe. It "could be done with a small outlay of money by attaching Blind Asylums to the *Pinjrapoles*" (institutions for the shelter and care of animals) and similar establishments" maintained by the charitably disposed "mahajans (literally 'great men' but figuratively 'traders'). He also exhorted the Government in British India and the administrations in the Indian States to "come forward to do their utmost in this direction."

He noticed with admiration that great care was taken to preserve sites, buildings and furniture of antiquarian interest. He could easily enter into the feelings of a man who was deeply attached to the antiquities of his country.

He did not care at all for Glasgow. Its industrial "bustle and activity" and the accompanying noise and dirt repelled him.

He was charmed with the lakes. They reminded him of Scott's "Lady of the Lake" which he had read shortly before embarking upon the journey.

The rugged beauty of the Scotch Highlands enchanted him. He did not wonder that the Highlanders had such a love for the land of their birth, "one of the most lovely countries in the world."

The more he saw of Scotland the more beautiful it seemed to him. He declared:

"If I were to compare Scotland with England from the superficial knowledge I have acquired of both the countries, I might say that Scotland is a place for learning and quiet pursuits of life; and England a place of restless activity and commercial enterprise. One may be likened to the rising billows of the sea, the other to the calm, unruffled waters of the lake."

13

Not in everything did he find Britain ahead of his own country. He had, for instance, seen pyrotechnics in India that were quite as good and in some instances much better than the fireworks at the Crystal Palace. He did not care for such displays, since they involved "a great waste of money."

Some acrobats and contortionists whom he had seen at the Royal Aquarium in Westminster were, in his opinion, "not at all superior" to performers in India, where he had witnessed more extraordinary manoeuvres of the rope by almost naked rope-dancers."

A man who imitated the notes of various birds and animals at the same show did not, in his estimation, come up to mimics in his own country.

Nobody paid much heed to such performers in India because they did not exhibit their skill from a stage, furnished with "tables, chairs and other appen-

dages of outward show," but gave their performance in the open air. They have yet to learn what attraction lay in secrecy.

Though he could appreciate western music, especially as it was rendered in Westminster Abbey, he preferred Indian music, which he considered was "more ancient, more scientific and more complete." He compared European music to a "pen and ink sketch, exhibiting only broad outlines," while an Indian *raga* (mode of musical expression) was like a complete picture showing the minutest shades and colours to perfection."

Similarly in respect of dancing, he preferred the Indian to the European art. In his view:

"the various movements of limbs, which appear distasteful to a foreigner, are...full of charm and meaning. There is a ring of gracefulness about it which is, I believe, wanting in an European dance."

Yet dancing had fallen into disrepute in India. It was "confined to the professional few, especially of the feminine sex," often with an unsavoury reputation.

He did not "see the utility of fancy dress balls" and was "at a loss to understand why so much time, money, and ingenuity should be wasted on the sartorial art for the sake of the ephemeral delight of an evening. He "certainly would not prohibit luxury to those who possessed the means to indulge in it, but the labour and expenditure on it should," he thought, "be in proportion to the enjoyment to be derived therefrom." Luxury merely for "its own sake" was of "little good."

His mind, it will be seen, disapproved of extravagance in whatever form. India, he pointed out, had discovered the way to obtain the maximum joy out of the minimum expenditure.

14

The appearance of women upon the stage lent "a great charm to" it and filled the house. He however doubted if the system was "a wholesome one." His conservative countrymen would not favour members of the two sexes playing together "with all the license and liberty which a stage is capable of giving."

He had his own ideas in regard to acting. He called "...that acting good which is natural and life-like, not affected and overdone. The actors should try to represent on the stage what we see in everyday life, in a pleasing and instructive manner. For good moral plays are, in my opinion, the best reforming agencies. They can successfully expose the weaknesses and vagaries of social life and bring home the truth, that virtue, howsoever persecuted in the beginning, is always triumphant in the end, and that vice and immorality will always lead to ruin and perdition. They must inspire the audience with admiration for what is morally good and scorn for what is radically bad. This should be the goal towards which the actors direct their histrionic talents. If they fail to do this they belie their profession. Mere amusement without instruction is good for nothing. I have noticed this shortcoming in a number of plays I have seen in this country (England). The scenery, as a rule, is got up with great cost and ingenuity. The stage is adorned with all the auxiliaries of beauty which human skill can invent. The acting is often very charming and amusing, but the moralizing factor is either absent or plays only a minor or subordinate part."

Certainly a varied dramatic feast was spread before him during his tour abroad. He had witnessed "Macbeth," in Bombay and "La Traviata" at Malta.

In England he saw such dramas as "Much Ado About Nothing," "The Merchant of Venice" and the "Lyons Mail," with Henry Irving and Ellen Terry in the principal rôles; "Fedora," with Sara Bernhardt as the heroine; "Rip Van Winkle;" "The Silver King;" "The Danischefs;" Sheridan's "Rivals;" and "Storm-Beaten." He went to see "A Trip to the Moon"—an extravaganza, as it was then called, or a *Révue*, as it would be known to-day. He listened to typically English music in light operas like "Iolanthe" and "Pinafore." He attended entertainments at theatres whose very names have to-day been forgotten and was thrilled by the acting of men and women who long ago left the stage of this world for "that bourne from which no traveller e'er returns."

14

He took, on the whole, a favourable view of the conditions in which women lived and moved in the west. An English lady played a "more honourable role in an English household than an Indian lady" did in hers, he thought.

He would "like to give more liberty to the Indian ladies," but not "quite to the extent to which an English lady was privileged to enjoy it." It would, he thought, be enough for Indian purposes if the Indian women were given as "much liberty as their sex enjoyed in times gone by."

He was opposed to *pardah* system. He could "see no reason why women should be confined within the four walls of their house and not allowed to go out without being veiled." But at the same time he did "not wish to see an Indian lady dance arm-in-arm with a young man in a ball-room."

The British, he found, entertained wrong notions regarding the status of Indian women. It was wrong

for any one to suppose that an Indian lady had no privileges. In household matters, she was the leading spirit. In some castes he admitted, she was still considered a nonentity and ought, he believed, to be assigned the place to which she was entitled.

He admitted that the Hindu house was "often the theatre of constant strifes and heart-burnings between mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law." In every social question, nevertheless, the Indian women's voice was "greatly respected." The wife participated in every religious rite. When opinions differed in a household her opinion generally prevailed.

Even at that age, he realized that education was the pivot of progress.* He attached special importance to illuminating women's minds and was unhappy that Indian women were not so well educated as their sisters were in ancient times. He would have "Indian women educated in the old fashion."

Though there were no girls' schools or women's colleges in our land in ancient times, Indian women "were none the less educated. Father, brother, mother, husband or some other" relative instructed girls and thus education became "a sort of inheritance that passed from mother to daughter." In those days, he wrote, the

"...mother was the real mistress of her daughter. She taught her to read and write the vernacular and Sanskrit characters, to read and understand some sacred books tending to make her pious, chaste and modest, taught her to sing hymns, *garbas*† and nuptial songs, taught her sewing, cooking, worshipping, and managing the

* His observations on this subject are further discussed in Chapter VII.

† Now spelled *garba*—a classical dance. References to it will occur in later chapters.

household affairs. Elementary arithmetic was also a part of her curriculum. An implicit obedience to the husband's order was the first duty impressed on her mind. This sort of female education is not yet defunct. It prevails even now in certain families. I should like to see this revived to a greater extent."

16

He deprecated the system of "infant marriage." He believed that marriage should be solemnized only after girls were old enough to know what it meant. He would permit them to choose their husbands—as *Kshatriya* maidens† did in olden times.

He was careful to refrain from urging Brahmans and certain other castes to do likewise, as he felt at that time that the *shastras* prescribed marriage of Brahman girls before puberty. Certain modernized *pandits*—the great Iswara Chandar Vidyasagar in Bengal and Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj—had quoted chapter and verse to disprove that belief: but it persisted nevertheless—still does, in fact, among the ultra-orthodox Hindus.

The Thakore Sahib condemned polygamy as a "pernicious custom." It seemed to him "a great pity" that some Indian castes clung to it.

He admired the "very simple and intelligible" marriage rites in vogue in England, but it seemed to him that the Indian ritual, though complicated, was "more binding and touching, if properly understood." Unfortunately the service was performed in Sanskrit, which was not "now understood by the majority of the people." Not only were its beauty and majesty therefore lost upon the bride and the groom but they also failed to derive any idea as to the nature

† The warrior caste, to which the author of the *Journal* belonged.

of the vows they had exchanged—the duties they had assumed. These difficulties could be overcome if the substance of the ancient formulas was “explained in the vernacular to them.”

So averse was he from permitting a widow of high caste to contract another union that he hesitated to pen his thoughts in this connection.

17

Visits to industrial and commercial towns such as Leeds and Liverpool brought home to him the weakness of the Indian economic system. Raw materials, he noticed, were sent out of the country and manufactured goods received in exchange.

At Liverpool he found, for instance, large quantities of raw wool being brought in from our own and other countries. Fancy, he exclaimed, the expenses entailed in the transport of raw materials from India and in sending back the manufactured goods. All this money might be saved if the material could be worked up in our own country where labour was very cheap.

He wished “some enterprising companies in India” would start textile and other factories at convenient centres. Indian capitalists could not “invest their money in a better way.” To ensure the success of industrial undertakings, India would, he thought, have to depend for some time upon expert assistance from outside.

Until Indian manufacturers could compete on even terms with imported goods, Government should, he felt, “put some prohibitive duties on foreign imports.” Not being “an out-and-out protectionist,” he urged however, that these duties should “be removed as soon as the Indian industries were in a fit condition to compete with similar industries in other countries.” To protect the industries of a country,

though only temporarily, was "to give time to a feeble country to recover her strength and to develop her internal resources." As soon as that object had been attained, "a free trade policy might be adopted with advantage."

He was sure "that the introduction of a free trade policy in India, at a time when her glorious industries" were in danger of being "swept away by the gushing torrents of foreign goods produced in more favoured circumstances," had not been "fair." He very much doubted "if England could have risen to be the greatest (industrial and) commercial country in the world if she had followed the free trade system from the beginning—had not had recourse to heavy protective duties on foreign goods a century back."

18

Bhagvat Sinhjee was not quite happy at the manner in which his itinerary had been arranged. Much of the time he could remain away from home was spent in Britain—most of it, in fact, in England.

Hardly anything else could have been expected, inasmuch as his tour had been mapped out by Britons, one of whom acted as his "guide, philosopher and friend." Had the Thakore Sahib been able to choose, he doubtless would have allowed himself more time on the Continent.

The six weeks, from September 11th to October 28th, that he spent in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Italy, did him much good. It enabled him to see something of how continental peoples lived and worked—how they, in their own way—accomplished great things. Such an experience was useful because his upbringing had been so completely dominated by Britons.

Shortly after his arrival in Paris he came to the conclusion that the French capital surpassed London in beauty. He liked "the broad streets lined with trees on either side, with separate foot-paths and rides and drives for carriages."

Paris was particularly picturesque by night. "The long lines of lamps shining, the broad streets for miles together, with the brilliant illuminations of the shops," gave "the whole city the appearance of a continual *Divali*." *

He drove out to the Bois de Boulogne where he had refreshments at the restaurant adjoining the cascades which he described as "very pretty." The whole park appeared to him to be "admirably laid out in walks and drives to suit the taste of all people." In parts it was "too prim;" but on the whole it was "a very good park." It must, he thought, be "a charming place to explore in every direction," during the summer.

The art treasures of Paris and its environs delighted him. How astonished people in India would be to see the pictures and statuary in the Luxembourg Palace, which appealed to him as a superb building.

On the eve of his departure from the French capital he remarked: "I wish we had curtailed our stay in London...in order to see some of the principal towns of France, and especially Paris, a little more leisurely." He had, as he quaintly put it, "scarcely smelled the dainties before the dishes" were removed.

19

From Paris he rushed to Brussels and thence to Cologne. He missed the scenery as he had, unfortunately, to cross the Rhine in the dark.

* Originally *Deepavali*, feast of lights. On the night designated as such in the Hindu calendar, lights are lit, in great profusion, in Hindu homes, temples and streets.

His tour in Switzerland, too, was hurried. He was "surprised to notice that the electric telegraph" extended "to almost all villages in that country;" and that "even the smallest hotels" were "supplied with electric bells." It "excelled England in utilising electricity."

The mountains reminded him of the Girnar, the highest hill in Kathiawar. As he described them in his *Journal*:

"The best way to give some idea of it to the people of Gondal is to suppose the whole of Kathiawar covered with mountains thrice the size of the Girnar after the monsoon, with their peaks all tipped with snow. The Girnar, however, is full of variety of verdure and therefore more beautiful than the Swiss mountains which are covered with the same sort of vegetation."

20

In Italy he had the honour of being received in audience by his Holiness the Pope. Rome, which he described as the "Benares of Italy" greatly interested him because of its beautiful churches and historic associations."

St. Peter's astonished him. It covered "an area of eight English acres" and was said to have cost a crore of rupces. He had never seen a structure that, in point of immensity and beauty, surpassed it.

The minute he saw lemons growing in Italian gardens "over trellis-work like vines," he made up his mind to experiment with them in Gondal. He also thought that some European species of trees and plants would do well in his State and made arrangements for cuttings and seeds to be sent out for this purpose.

On the voyage home he had plenty of time to ponder all he had seen and heard during his five months in Europe. The differences in the mental attitude of his own people and Europeans stood out clear as crystal in his mind. He wrote:

"My countrymen are accustomed to think less of the present life, and more of the life to come in which they have an unshaken belief, and hence it is that they are not progressive in the modern sense of the word. The Europeans are more worldly and political, the Hindus more retired and religious. Comparatively speaking, the sun of knowledge seems to have risen but recently on the Continent of Europe (Greece and Rome may be considered as exceptions), and the people are intoxicated with intense pleasures derived from the new light, and are making a jubilee of it. In India, the sun not only rose some thousands of years back, but shone in its full splendour for a very long time till it set, and has dawned again with its lustre beautifully reflected from the west. This does not excite our people much, for the knowledge is not new to them. The only thing desirable is that they should shake off their slumber as the sun had gone pretty high. They should cultivate their faculties, which are lying dormant for want of exertion. In Europe out of ten men that I met, nine were educated. In India the proportion is quite the reverse. This is much to be regretted."

While Europeans were, as a rule, "energetic, enterprising and fit for active work," Indians were, broadly speaking, very quiet and retiring, with a strong inclination towards meditation. While Europeans relied on "the power of action," Indians depended

"on the power of fate." The European watch-word was "forward" the Indian "as you were."

The ideas contained in the Thakore Sahib's *Journal* have been examined at some length as they disclose the working of his mind shortly before he began to administer his State. They clearly indicate that he would not be satisfied to plod in the furrow ploughed by his predecessors, whether of his own blood or sect to rule Gondal during his adolescence.



CHAPTER V

Minority Regime

1

For nine years following Bapu Sagramjee's death the administration was carried on directly by the Political Agency at Rajkot through an Assistant* stationed at Gondal. In September, 1878, "the Joint Administration" consisting of a British and an Indian official, was set up. The British Administrator† was changed from time to time; but Mr. Jayashankar Lalshankar, an experienced Indian Official from the Agency, served from the commencement of the period of management until a few months prior to Bhagvat Sinhjee's investiture in 1884.

During the early part of the minority regime there was much distress in the State. For three years, beginning with 1875, the rainfall was scanty. Crops failed, particularly cotton—the "money crop," as it was called—causing great loss to the farmers and traders. Thousands of cows and bullocks perished through shortage of fodder.

* These Assistants were: Captain G. R. Goodfellow, Captain J. H. Lloyd, Captain A. M. Phillips, Major William Scott, Major H. N. Reeves and Captain W. A. Salmon.

† These Administrators were: Major William Scott and Major H. L. Nutt. During intervals of their absence Major G. E. Hancock and Mr. P. S. V. Fitzgerald acted for them.

Drought was followed by a deluge. Over 88 inches of rain fell in 1887—more than three times the quantity that had fallen in any twelve months during the preceding quarter of a century, when people had to be content with 24 inches a year.

The whole district to the west of Dhoraji was flooded. Numerous houses were destroyed. Roads disappeared.

An army of locusts suddenly swooped down and devoured such vegetation as had survived the drought and flood. As one writer commented:

"...of the six calamities which according to the Hindu idea, can befall a country—scarcity of rain, mice, locusts, parrots, and foreign invasion—the State had already been visited by three in close succession."

2

There also was considerable friction between Hindus and Muslims. Its roots lay almost on the surface. Certain privileges had been conceded to the followers of the Prophet by Sagramjee on the advice of Dave Harjivan. The concessions were inconsequential, but they roused the ire of the Hindus.

There is warrant for supposing that Bhagvat Sinhjee would have acted differently had he been in power at the time. Certain statements he made in his *Journal* while in Europe give an indication of his resentment, though he was too discreet to specify this incident.

The cow was "supposed to be the most sacred animal in India," he wrote. "To kill one was regarded as a very heinous sin. To slaughter thousands of cows for obtaining beef inflicted a very deep wound in the heart of the Hindu. Cow-killing in India was politically wrong since it engendered a bitter ill feeling between the rulers and the conquered races."

A cow when living, provided food for a greater number of men for a longer time than it did when killed. Cow-killing was therefore to be condemned on purely economic considerations, apart from the religious aspect of the question.

It was, he continued, "equally wrong to kill cows on agricultural grounds." Bullocks were "the only animals used for ploughing purposes" and constituted the wealth of the cultivating classes."

By killing cows, the number of bullocks was lessened. The price of bullocks had actually increased, not because demand for them had "grown in proportion," but because, through slaughter, they were becoming rare. Agriculture, in consequence, suffered seriously—"a very great evil" in an agricultural country like India.

He wished that the British Government would grasp the fact that it was "a grave political blunder to hurt the religious sensibilities of an alien people by permitting the killing of cows, which are not only innocent, mild and useful creatures, but are held holy by a large section of the people." It would "entail no great sacrifice to prohibit cow-killing in British India." Persons used to eating beef may suffer some inconvenience but the corresponding advantage would be that "the hearts of a whole section of the people would be won over at one stroke."

To return to the minority regime:

Hindus especially of the trading classes, also felt embittered over what they regarded as the enhancement of Muslim influence in the administration, particularly towards the close of that regime. The action of which they complained was taken at a time when merchants (mostly Hindus) were in a gloomy frame of mind. The destruction of crops through drought and flood had inflicted heavy losses upon them. Their discontent found vent in political agitation.

Despite drought, floods, pestilence and Hindu-Muslim friction, some progress was made, particularly during the six years of the Joint Administration. A glowing description was given of it by Lieutenant-Colonel E. W. West, the agent of the Government of Bombay stationed in Kathiawar, when winding it up.

According to him, "when the State first came under the management of the Bombay Government the balance in hand was Rs.19,61,143 and the Revenue was under Rs.8,00,000 *per annum*. It had no roads to speak of. There were only a few schools. The law courts were of a rudimentary description. There was no organized police force or regular jails, or hospitals.

During the fourteen years of the Thakore Sahib's minority, upwards of Rs.56,00,000 had been spent upon public works, education and general improvements. For that expenditure the Administration had "to show 96 miles of metalled roads and a large extent of fair-weather roads, a railway 73 miles in length, seven first-class bridges, a telegraph line, 64 schools, attended by 3,745 scholars, handsome hospitals and good dispensaries, a fine jail; and several suitable lock-ups, besides other works too numerous to mention."*

Colonel West also took pride in the fact that the law courts had been placed on "a good footing" and that "a thoroughly well organized police numbering upwards of 400 horse and foot" were at that time protecting life and property. Forest conservancy, which he regarded as a matter of special importance in Kathiawar, had also "been attended to." Every department of the State "had been put in thorough order."

* *Installation of H. H. Bhagrat Sinhjee of Gondal on 25th August 1864*, The Bombay Education Society's Press, Byculla.

It gave Colonel West great satisfaction to note that the revenue had been "raised from below Rs.8,00,000 to upwards of Rs.12,00,000 *per annum*." He took care to add that this increase had been brought about "without any extra pressure on the *rayats* (cultivators)" who were, "in fact, in a more prosperous condition than they were before."

The savings effected amounted to some Rs.43,50,000, despite the liberal expenditure upon improvements. To quote him:

"The cash balances are some Rs.5,50,000 in the Treasury, Rs.9,00,000 in Government (of India) paper, and Rs.50,000 as a fixed deposit in the Bank of Bombay, while Rs.29,00,000 have been invested in the Bhavnagar-Gondal Railway, on which nearly 4 *per cent.* is now received, while a much higher rate of interest may fairly be looked for in the future. The total balance is altogether upwards of Rs.43,50,000."

The Political Agent insisted that "these results must be acknowledged to be in the highest degree satisfactory." No figures could show, he added, "what difficulties have had to be contended with, what obstacles overcome and what obstructions removed" to achieve this progress.

4

In assessing the results Colonel West appears to have erred on the side of generosity. He was, for one thing, praising the work of his assistants and trying to show "that the British Government"—his employer—"had faithfully looked after the interests of its ward."

If his remark that "every department of the State has been put in thorough order," could be taken literally, nothing was left for Bhagvat Sinhjee

to do other than to attend to duties of a purely routine nature and to try to prevent any back-sliding upon the part of the officials. In reality, hardly a beginning had been made in giving Gondal a progressive form of administration.

The communications existing in the State at the end of the minority regime were utterly inadequate to the needs of the people and most of them were poor in quality. So, too, were the other public works. The same could be said of schools and benevolent institutions.

The police were almost entirely unlettered. None of them had received any special training in the detection of crime. As we shall see in a subsequent chapter, life and property in many villages were at the mercy of high-way robbers.

The courts were presided over by men who lacked legal training and who had to rely upon a heterogeneous mass of regulations that no one had troubled to codify.

The financial system was chaotic. Owing to opposition from the people attempts at reform of the land tenure had to be withdrawn or were limited to a few villages.

Nothing whatever had been attempted in respect of rooting out social evils. The various Britons who, at one time or another, administered or helped to administer Gondal during these years generally avoided interfering with old customs, no matter how prejudicial they might be to the people's health and general well-being.

This was a period of great trial to the Rani-mother. She had been bereft of her husband since 1869. A few months after she had consented to her son going to Rajkot her daughter had fallen ill. The best medical aid was procured: but she died in April, 1875, while on a visit to her mother leaving behind

an infant who, as Bhav Sinbjee, afterwards ascended the Bhavnagar *gadi* (throne).

A year later Bai Monghiba suffered another bereavement. Her brother, Jhala Kalian Singh of Minapur, to whom she was deeply attached, died suddenly.

6

The Rani-mother, parted from her son, was sorely troubled at heart. She longed for the day when Bhagvat Sinbjee would be permitted to come into his own.

It so happened that just about the time she had consented to permit her son to go abroad some rajas of much the same age as he had been invested with ruling powers. Their States were actually in Kathiawar, or were in political relationship with the Bombay Government.

She did not see why her son should be differentiated against. She knew that he was possessed of quick intelligence, had worked assiduously at College and won the appreciation of his teachers and examiners. She had also been assured that the grand tour upon which he had embarked would further fit him to rule.

Much cogitation finally led her to make a representation to the Governor-in-Council in Bombay. This document, a copy of which has been preserved in the State archives, is couched in dignified and impressive terms. Every word is instinct with maternal love and confidence in the ability and character of her son and faith in his destiny.

"The British Government has always sincerely evinced a laudable desire and readiness to restore to the minor Chiefs the administration of their States at the earliest opportunity," she reminded Sir James Fergusson. Fourteen years had, nevertheless, elapsed since her husband's demise. Her son, who then was

four years of age, had at that moment passed his eighteenth year. He had completed his studies at the Rajkumar College with every distinction. In witness thereof she reproduced extracts from letters and reports.

"Having so creditably finished a long course of education," she insisted, it was "highly desirable that he should be initiated into the administration of his State—an event to which she, as his mother, his family and his subjects" looked forward with the greatest eagerness. In order, however, "to meet entirely the wishes of the Bombay Government, she had acceded without complaint to the proposal that he should start on a tour to Europe."

This tour, she added, had enabled her son to see "renowned countries and cities of the west and reformed classes of inhabitants" and to acquaint "himself with the several civilized nations and seats of industry, manufacture and different branches of learning." It was but natural for her to expect that upon his return from Europe "he would soon be placed in independent charge of his State, or at any rate be allowed to have a share in the administration of its affairs if only to acquire knowledge and experience of the obligations and responsibilities of his status."

7

Within five weeks from January 22, 1884, when this moving appeal was made, the Joint Administration at Gondal was reconstituted. Major Nutt continued in office, but Mr. Jayashankar Lalshankar was transferred to the State Treasury. His place was taken by Bhagvat Sinhjee, so that he might acquire the art of ruling by bearing responsibility jointly with an experienced administrator for a time.

Bhagvat Sinhjee attended office regularly. He went through the files sent up for orders and, whenever he needed information, asked officials to see him. Once he arrived at a decision he stuck to it. Young and inexperienced though he was, he did not hesitate, on occasion, to differ from Major Nutt and present, politely but firmly, the opposite side of the question.

As opportunity offered Bhagvat Sinhjee toured his State, familiarizing himself with the land and the people. He visited the revenue offices, police *kuchcheris*, magisterial courts, schools and hospitals.

Major Nutt, finding him interested and interesting, took pains to initiate him into the details of administration. So did Mr. Jayashankar and the other heads of departments and the senior assistants with whom he came in contact.



CHAPTER VI

Investiture

1

The Government of Bombay fixed August 25, 1884, as the date for handing over the administration of the State to Bhagvat Sinbjee. Sir James Fergusson, who, with the unanimous consent of his Councillors, had ordered the transfer, was, much to his regret, prevented by other duties from being present. He deputed Colonel E. W. West to represent him.

The Political Agent proceeded in state to Gondal on the morning of the appointed day. His party included Colonel Fisher, in command of the 13th Native infantry; Lieutenant-Colonel William Scott, Assistant Political Agent in Sorath; Major G. E. Hancock, then Acting President of the Rajasthanik Court; Mr. Chester Macnaghten, the Principal, Rajkumar College; Major J. M. Hunter, Acting Superintendent of surveys under the Rajasthanik Court; Captain Gleig; Dr. F. G. Barker, Civil Surgeon; Mr. F. C. O. Beaman, the Judicial Assistant, who afterwards became Judge of the Bombay High Court; Lieutenant Abad, Staff Officer, Rajkot; Rev. G. Taylor; Captain L. L. Fenton, Assistant Political Agent, Halar; and Mr. Warden, Assistant Political Agent, Gohelvad.

In consonance with the custom, the Political Agent was received by the Thakore Sahib, accompanied

by his principal officials. His arrival was heralded by a salute of 11 guns; and he was conducted to Major Nutt's bungalow.

Many Rajas and Rajkumars also journeyed to Gondal to witness the investiture of the Thakore Sahib. Some of them had been with him at college, notably the Nawab Nasur-Ullah Khan of Sachin; the Yuvaraja of Rajpipla; the Nawabzada Edal Khan of Junagadh; the Rajkumar Ranjit Sinhjee of Jamnagar, who was soon to join Cambridge University and was destined to achieve great renown as a cricketer; the Rajkumars Rai Sinhjee and Jai Sinhjee of Malia; the Rajkumar of Gadhdka; the Rajkumar Rai Sinhjee of Bhimrad and the Rajkumar Bhupat Sinhjee of Shahpur.

Gondal presented a gala appearance. Tastefully decorated arches, bunting and flags adorned the streets through which surged farmers and traders clad in rainbow coloured clothing. They poured in from all parts of the State, some in horse-drawn carriages, many in bullock carts and many more on foot.

2

As the sun was mounting towards the meridian the Political Agent, accompanied by his Staff, proceeded to the Palace to pay Bhagvat Sinhjee a return call. Happy-visaged spectators pressed round the gateway surmounted by the square clock tower leading into the courtyard, lined with His Highness' troops and body-guard. Garlands and bright-hued streamers festooned the walls of the Palace and pennons fluttered from every point projecting from the roof.

As soon as the Political Agent's party alighted from their carriages the State band struck up the National Anthem. Colonel West and his companions proceeded up the long, broad flight of steps at the opposite end of the courtyard.

Clad in a long, cream-coloured robe heavily embroidered with gold bullion and wearing a gold turban, the Thakore Sahib met the party at the entrance to his private suite and, walking ahead of them, led them into his drawing-room. After a few minutes' talk he escorted them through the dining-room, billiard-room, library and other apartments.

They were particularly interested in the library. The walnut and maple book-cases were filled to overflowing with choice works. One section was devoted to books on Indian medicine which he had collected with considerable difficulty. Another contained Persian literature and a third Gujarati volumes.

After *pan-supari* (betel-leaf and spices) had been distributed, the whole party, including the Thakore Sahib, entered carriages and were driven to the Veri Gate. Here Colonel West performed the opening ceremony of the Bhagvat Sinhjee Library and Municipal Hall, just completed.

The speeches over, the party ascended the spiral staircase and admired from the roof the splendid scene that stretched before them. The Gondli shone like a shimmering silver ribbon. On its embankment was a pretty garden laid out upon ground reclaimed from the river. In the midst of green trees, flowering shrubs and beds of gay blossoms, was an iron band-stand. From every open space masses of faces were turned upwards watching the visitors' movements.

3

The party next proceeded to the site on which the Gondal State Workshops were to be erected. When all were seated in a tent pitched for the ceremony, Major Nutt explained the purpose the Administration had in view.

He was "convinced, that much of the education" imparted to "boys of humble parentage" was "leading some of them to expect positions in life to which they" were ill suited, and to which it was mere folly upon their part to aspire. He believed that they could find a far happier future by entering "the ordinary trades of mason, carpenter, blacksmith" and the like rather than by putting forth "uncertain and often unavailing efforts to become *karkuns* (clerks) or obtain employment in the State service." *

As soon as the Gondal artisans saw "what good work" was "done in this State Workshop they would find the necessity of keeping pace with the times and turning out work of equal, if not of superior nature." In this way the standard of workmanship would be "raised generally, and the Gondal people" would be "on the true road of progress."

It may be added in passing that a year earlier the Thakore Sahib had given expression to similar views. He had recorded in his *Journal*: †

"In India we have, from time immemorial, hereditary classes of artisans, who acquire their professional knowledge from father to son. No doubt they are moving in the same groove, but then this very circumstance gives them a certain knack in their trade. Our schoolmasters who are abroad have tempted away the sons of the artisan classes from their legitimate duties, stuffed their brains with things which concerned them not, and cast them adrift in the world, without offering them any other alternative. This is the beginning of the decline and fall of the indigenous arts and industries of the country."

* *Installation of H. H. Bhagvat Singhjee, Thakore Sahib of Gondal, on the 25th of August, 1884*, p. 12.

† *Journal of a Visit to England in 1858. By Bhagvat Singhjee Thakore Sahib of Gondal*, pp. 248-249.

"It might look strange," Bhagvat Sinhjee continued, "but it was nevertheless a fact. All classes, from the highest to the lowest, attended schools. There they imbibed a sort of hatred and disgust for their respective professions and aspired to a clerkship, school-mastership, or any-other-ship under the Government." He suggested that "mechanical schools and schools of other branches of science should be established at important places. In these institutions the artisans would have ample scope to combine their home-got knowledge with the improved appliances of the west, and they will be in a position to manufacture many things in India for which we have to depend entirely upon foreign supplies, and thereby make the country once more flourishing."

He thought that the arts and sciences should be taught through the Indian languages so that the students may be able to comprehend them easily. He did not, however, believe that "the important secrets of the arts and sciences need be disclosed freely and indiscriminately to all persons. On the contrary, care should be taken to impart instruction to those only who prove by their conduct and assurance worthy of the same. It had been the time-honoured custom in India to take such a precaution—important truths were not made known until the teacher was satisfied, after putting his pupil through a sufficiently long test, that the latter was in every way fit and would not abuse the knowledge confided to him."

Major Nutt could therefore feel that when he retired from Gondal, as he expected to do shortly, the experiment would be given a fair trial under Bhagvat Sinhjee's watchful eye. It had been arranged by the two, working in concert, that the Workshops should be under the direct superintendence of the State Engineer. Each of the apprentices admitted would receive a stipend.

A printing press would be installed and would execute work for private customers as well as for the State. Wood and stone-carving, book-binding, leather-work, carriage repairs and similar industries would be carried on, providing employment for many persons.

4

After Colonel West had laid the corner-stone of the Workshops, the party dispersed until 5 o'clock, the hour fixed for the performance of the principal ceremony. Long before that time the streets in the immediate vicinity of the Palace were so closely packed with humanity that a gangway just wide enough to permit the carriages containing the guests to pass through could be kept open with great difficulty. Windows, balconies and roofs of houses along the way were crowded to the danger-point. Perfect order however prevailed and no untoward incident occurred.

The scene in the courtyard was even more animated than it had been earlier in the day. The State troops and police were ranged round the enclosure. An ornamental arch spanned the base of the broad staircase. The guard of honour extended from the bottom to the top, while the Body-guard, with Commandant Jivabhai at their head, stood in front of Bhagvat Sinhjee's private apartments. On a high terrace a large number of attendants clad in multi-coloured garments were massed. All the windows and ledges were packed with spectators of both sexes.

Salutes were fired by gunners stationed near the river's bank as personages entitled to them entered the Durbar Hall, one after the other, in accordance with the order of precedence. The palace shook and was lit up with the flashes from the gun-fire.

He met Colonel West at the entrance to the Durbar Hall. The two, accompanied by their respective staffs, walked towards the other end of the Hall.

The Thakore Sahib was then conducted by the Political Agent on his right and Major Nutt on his left to a chair of State on the dais, on which he was seated by the Political Agent. Three rows of seats had been arranged, running practically the entire length of the chamber.

The Political Agent took his seat on a separate dais on the right of the Thakore Sahib. At his right sat Major Nutt. Next to him Colonel Fisher, Lieutenant-Colonel Scott, Major Hancock, Mr. Macnaghten, Major Hunter, Captain Gleig, Dr. Barker, Mr. Beaman, Lieutenant Abud, Rev. G. Taylor, Captain Fenton and Mr. Warden.

Next to the Thakore Sahib sat Bhav Sinhjee, only eight years old, who was present at the ceremony as his father's special representative and as such, had, on his arrival, been accorded a deafening salute from the guns.

Alongside the little prince sat the third son of the Raja of Dharampur—one of the Thakore Sahib's brothers-in-law. His manly figure arrayed in rich garments and resplendent jewels made him conspicuous even in that brilliant assembly. Next to him sat the other princes in order of precedence. Behind them were ranged the representatives of neighbouring States, foremost among them the Dewan of Junagadh, and other Indian personages.

Mr. Nutt and Mr. Scott and a few Parsi ladies sat at a short distance, where they could see everything that was going on.

It was a colourful scene, such as may not be witnessed except at an Oriental Court and, at that, only on special occasions. Jewels glistened and heavily

embroidered silk rustled as people moved about. Sweet incense and perfume scented the air.

5

As the echo of the last salute died down the Political Agent rose and began the carefully prepared address he had brought with him. By way of introduction he recapitulated the progress made during the minority regime, which was summarized in the preceding chapter.

Colonel West then reminded the Thakore Sahib that he was coming into power over the State at a time when it was in a flourishing condition such as it had never been before. He recalled that Bhagvat Sinhjee had enjoyed the advantage of leading the healthy life of a student in an institution "planned on the lines of those great schools in England" which had turned out so many of Britain's best men, where he had "attained a high position and acquired a reputation."

Nor did he forget to add that the Thakore Sahib had been initiated "into the public business" of his State by being associated in the administration so that he did "not come as a mere novice to hold the reins of power." His ideas also had "been enlarged by travel in Europe."

The Political Agent exhorted the young man to govern the State better than any of his predecessors by following "in the paths already marked out, and to keep up the existing institutions in full vigour." It was necessary for him, he pointed out,

"...to be guided by the same principles that have actuated those who administered the State during your minority. Choose your line of action in the beginning and adhere to it. There are many factions in Gondal, and party-spirit

has ere now done much harm there. Personally, of course, you are above such party feeling; but there will not be wanting those who will try to induce you to favour one faction at the expense of another. There will be no lack of irresponsible advisers who will urge you to follow the dictates of caprice or the impulse of passion rather than the course pointed out by duty. To such, I am sure, you will lend no ear. Consult your responsible advisers, among whom, for the next three months, will be the officer with whom you have lately been associated in the administration, and be guided by their advice."

To this sage counsel Colonel West added the assurance that in any moment of perplexity or difficulty Bhagvat Sinhjee would "find the officers of the (Political) Agency always ready and willing to assist" him. He "had mixed enough in European society and knew the officers of the Agency well enough to be free from the suspicion which ignorant Chiefs sometimes felt that we desire to encroach on your prerogatives and interfere unnecessarily."

So saying the Political Agent handed over to Bhagvat Sinhjee the insignia of power—the State seals and the key of the Gondal Treasury—and expressed the hope in behalf of all present that he would enjoy a long and prosperous career.

The Thakore Sahib then occupied the chair of State that had remained empty on the dais between the couches on which he sat at one side of the Hall and the Political Agent on the other.

A translation of Colonel West's speech was read by Khan Bahadur Dhanjishah Hormasji, Deputy Assistant Political Agent, Halar.

6

In replying to this address, the Thakore Sahib expressed his gratitude for the care bestowed upon his education by the Government of Bombay and its representative in Kathiawar. He was specially beholden to Mr. Macnaghten, the learned Principal of the Rajkumar College, who had taken the trouble to attend the function and to Professor Selby. Major Hancock, also present, had been "a guide, friend and companion" during his visit to Europe.

He expressed his gratification at finding that during his minority affairs in his State had "been administered under a system which was a happy blending of Native and European ideas." He was "glad to see that while local opinion had been enlisted in favour of reforms which appeared desirable in the eyes of the British Officers, no change had been made which however desirable, and however beneficial in themselves, were, at present at least, premature in a Native State and under the existing conditions of native society."

He assured Colonel West that, young though he was, he was "fully sensible of the responsibilities that devolved upon him as the Ruler of his State. His declaration of principles indicated that he was influenced by the highest ideals of rulership. He solemnly affirmed:

"I need hardly say that it will be my earnest desire to see that justice and order prevail in my State, that life and property are well protected, that the *Kunbi* enjoys the fruits of his labour, and the trader the profits of his trade, that roads are improved and communications facilitated, that education is encouraged, and provision is made for the relief of the sick poor..."

"If my efforts, however humble, are directed in fulfilment of these expectations, then I trust I

shall have done something to deserve, on the one hand, the confidence of the British Government which I most value, and, on the other, the loyal and willing obedience of those whose relations to their rulers, as the customs and usages of this country amply prove, have from time immemorial been those of children to their parents. Hence the study of their wants will be my especial care, as their contentment and happiness will be my chief reward."

These words were uttered with a sincerity of purpose that impressed everyone who heard them. They were immediately translated into Gujarati by the Chief Karbhari (the Prime Minister)—Azam Bezonji Merwanji.

The services of this "gentleman of approved merit and varied experiences" had been lent to the Thakore Sahib by the Bombay Government. He was entirely a self-made man.

7

Immediately the speeches were over all present crowded round Bhagvat Sinhjee and showered congratulations upon him. Bhav Sinhjee walked up to his uncle, shook him warmly by the hand, felicitated him in a firm voice and calmly returned to his seat. His attitude was that of one who was used to taking part in such formalities every day of his life.

Gold and silver trays loaded with betel leaves and the spices eaten with them were passed around. Each guest was presented with a phial containing *ittar* (*anglice* otto of roses) and a bottle of costly European scent. The Thakore Sahib placed golden garlands round the necks of the Agent and other Britons, shook hands with them heartily and gave them bouquets. His Chief Karbhari distributed garlands among the other guests.

Following this ceremony Bhagvat Sinhjee took his seat on the dais and had Colonel West sit at his right. The representatives of various States came forward, one by one, and presented offerings consisting of beautiful and costly articles such as *Kamkhob* (*Anglice* kinkob) and Kashmir shawls.

The presents from Bhavnagar were especially rich. Included among them were a gold necklace set with brilliants for the Thakore Sahib and eilas worth their weight in gold, the finest Dacca muslins, Benares embroidered *saris* and *bandhanis* of Jamnagar manufacture for the Ranis.

A State banquet followed this ceremony. The meal was *recherche*. The band played throughout the repast. Very short speeches were made in proposing and acknowledging the toasts, as every one was anxious to view the illuminations.

Long lines of lights bordered the roads on either side, producing the effect of festoons of fire fastened against the purple background of night. Myriads of little oil lamps adorned gateways and outlined the principal buildings.

From the top of the new Bhagvat Sinhjee Library and Municipal Hall, the guests watched a fine display of fireworks. Set-pieces, bombs, rockets and fire-balloons were let off. Persons who witnessed the show had no difficulty in realizing why the Thakore Sahib had written in his *Journal*, a short time earlier, that India had little to learn from the west in respect of pyrotechnics.

8

Next day Bhagvat Sinhjee met notables of Gondal and repeated to them the pledges he had given in the Durbar Hall the night before. People came from the most remote parts of the State to pay homage to

him. During the five hours he sat in State 5,000 men passed before him.

An address was presented in behalf of the Gondal Municipality. Mr. Manockji Rustomji Reporter, the official detailed to preside over that body, read it in English. Mr. Bhagvanlal Gopalrai Durkal, an official sitting on the Corporation, read a Gujarati version of it. A copy of each, printed in gold ink and enclosed in a richly brocaded *Kharita* was handed to the Ruler.

In his reply the Thakore Sahib refuted the allegation that India never had any municipal institutions of her own—that they had been introduced from abroad. These institutions on the contrary had existed.

“...since the time of the *Mahabharata*, but, like many a good thing, they declined with the decline of the country, so much so, that they have now lost the very traces of their existence. They are lying dormant for want of encouragement, or have lost all vitality, being neglected and forgotten. Of late, however, they have been resuscitated in a different and methodical form under the civilizing influences of the west.”

He exhorted the members of the Municipality “to keep pace with...the march of progress.” Reforms were being asked for from every quarter. He hoped that the Municipality, young though it was, would “not lack that zeal and energy which make a public body useful and popular. He reminded the City Fathers that they were the

“...guardians of public health which can best be secured by good sanitation, proper drainage and sewerage, ample supply of pure water, suppression and prevention of epidemic diseases, good and clean roads, scrupulous attention to dwelling houses and conservancy and various other measures.

"This forms an important factor in the happiness of a community."

His Highness assured the members of the Municipality that he would listen to any suggestions that might come from them—that he would earnestly endeavour to accord to the Corporation his hearty support. Referring to an allusion they had made to his education and travels abroad, he modestly remarked:

"I certainly do not wish to be judged in anticipation, but to be judged by the results of my actions. And until I have done something towards fostering public opinion in this State, and shown by word and by deed that my happiness consists in the happiness of my people, I cannot claim to deserve the praises you so kindly bestow on me."

In the chapters that follow we shall see how hard he has striven to fulfil the pledges that he gave his people upon coming into power.

Then the Dhoraji Municipality presented an address. Mr. Dulerai Mungalji Valai—detailed to preside over this body—who read it in Gujarati, took pride in the fact that their Ruler had been born in that town.

The Thakore Sahib, replying in the same language, expressed his happiness at being assured that his people were filled with *rajya bhakti* (attachment to the king) and hoped that that feeling would endure. He reiterated the pledges he had given in the Durbar Hall the day before and prayed to God for strength to fulfil them.

The *vakils* (lawyers) of Gondal and Dhoraji and citizens from Dhoraji and Upleta were next given audience. They were followed by a delegation composed of representatives of all clans of Gondal peasants, who voiced their delight at seeing the young Ruler installed upon the *gadi* of his ancestors.

Each village had sent its *patel* (headman) and *chowattia* (elders) to represent it. Dressed in holiday attire, they overflowed the Durbar Hall onto the steps and into the courtyard. For two hours the stream of humanity poured steadily in front of the Thakore Sahib.

He assured them that he had the people's interests at heart and would inquire into any grievance that might be brought to his notice with a view to remedying it. The simple-minded but whole-heartedly loyal people of the country-side were delighted with that pledge.

The delegates of the rural classes were succeeded by the *Bhagats* (kinsmen) and *Jicaidars* (persons in receipt of livelihood.) They expressed their joy at seeing him placed in power.

After resting for an hour the Thakore Sahib received the State officials of various grades, again in the Durbar Hall. Every one, from the head of a department to the humblest clerk, was formally presented to him. The Durbar lasted till half past nine o'clock.

9

Almost immediately, accompanied by the Political Agent and other guests, he went to open the People's Park. There a *fete* was proceeding. Thousands of persons in festive mood had taken possession of the grounds.

The State had provided roundabouts, swings and other amusements, free for all. A State elephant sauntered about the Park, the handsome howdah on its back full of men, women and children enjoying a "joy-ride"—to use a modern phrase—such as they had never dreamt of taking.

Acrobats and other performers gave exhibitions of their skill. Cricket enthusiasts played in the part of the Park reserved for games.

This Park, together with the Kailas Bagh which had been in existence for some time, provided the

citizens of Gondal with some 50 acres of recreation grounds. It was a pleasant spot, with blossoming plants, shrubs and shady trees. Arches overgrown with creepers spanned winding paths. Water plashed in fountains, the soft murmur suggesting coolness in a country where it was usually hot and dry.

In addition to being a refreshing, restful place, Kailas Bagh served as a botanical garden upon which the State Engineer lavished care. Gondal residents could, if they wished, pursue scientific study there in addition to enjoying sport and recreation.

10

With the opening of the new Park the functions connected with the Investiture came to an end. Colonel West reported to the Government of Bombay in a letter he wrote on August 26th that he had placed Bhagvat Sinhjee in full charge of his State, in accordance with the Resolution of that Government dated July 19th of the same year.

He forwarded with his letter a copy of the young Ruler's reply to the remarks which he had addressed to him on the occasion. This reply, he had been assured, was composed by Bhagvat Sinhjee without any aid. The tone and matter of it, he pointed out, reflected much credit on him.

On September 11, 1884, a Resolution was passed in which the Governor-in-Council expressed pleasure that Bhagvat Sinhjee had assumed the administration of his State. His Excellency had been gratified that the Thakore Sahib's speech had been composed by himself without outside assistance. He was glad to note that in

"...his acknowledgment of obligations to the British Government and Political Officer, the Thakore Sahib shows good feeling and good taste,

and his description of his duties as a Ruler evinces a sound and clear judgment. His Excellency-in-Council hopes, that the excellent mental qualities which the Thakore Sahib gives proof of possessing, may, by industry and energy, be turned to the best account, both for himself and for his subjects."



CHAPTER VII

Tasks Ahead

1

Three days prior to the expiry of the three months during which Major Nutt's services had been retained to assist the young Ruler in the administration of his State, Sir James Fergusson visited Gondal. He arrived there on November 21, 1884, accompanied by his Military Secretary, an *aide-de-camp* and the Assistant Political Agent in charge of the Halar *prant*. During the three days he stayed at the capital, the Municipality presented him with an address.

On November 24th the Thakore Sahib took his guests to Dhoraji, where His Excellency was to lay the foundation-stone of a hospital designed to be practically a duplicate of the one at Gondal. Designed in Gothic style, the main building was to be cross-shaped 190 feet long and 110 feet in breadth. A hexagonal ward was to be built at each of the four corners of the long block. It was to be "complete in every respect, with bath and dressing rooms," doctor's house and quarters for subordinates and servants; and was to have a large compound to be laid out as a garden for the benefit of the patients, 50 of whom could be accommodated in the wards.

The site for the institution had been wisely chosen. It was just outside the city walls, a hundred yards or so from the Junagadh gate and near the Municipality Gardens, on the road leading to the railway station, Dhoraji then being the railway terminus in the State. While readily accessible to citizens needing medical relief, it had the advantage of being away from the smoke, dust, contagion and noise to which it would have been exposed had it been built within the ramparts.

The Municipality presented an address of welcome to the Governor, who felt highly complimented by the insistence of the young Thakore Sahib upon associating his name with an institution meant to minister to suffering humanity. In laying the foundation-stone he delivered a short address that delighted alike his host, the officials and the people. The day was observed as a holiday by all classes.

2

The same day Major Nutt retired and the Thakore Sahib came fully into his own. No one who knew him expected that he would take his duties lightly and let his officials do the ruling for him. Temperamentally he was unfitted to pursue a policy of *laissez-faire*.

Some fifteen months earlier, while in London, he had written in his *Journal* that he favoured "absolute monarchy of the type perfected in India." It was impossible for any one who cherished that concept to tread the primrose path of dalliance.

The ideal held before the ruler by the *Raja-niti Shastra* (codes on Hindu polity) was lofty. As the Thakore Sahib himself stated, he could not rule arbitrarily, as foreigners supposed he could. Constitutional checks had been provided.

The first restraint imposed was spiritual. The raja had his "*Purohit* or spiritual guide, who must always be high-born, truthful, pious, most accomplished in law, worldly knowledge, moral philosophy and theology." It was the duty of this preceptor to issue a warning the moment he saw that the monarch was straying from the path of rectitude.

Then there was "an Executive Council of eight ministers, who assisted the raja in carrying on the administration. They were required to be perfectly acquainted with their respective duties. They must be well-bred, loyal, natives of the soil, and learned in the sacred lore."

There was, in addition, the "*Jan Sabha*, or People's Council." It was composed of men elected by the people themselves "from the eight principal directions and from the centre." They included representatives of the aristocracy or the land-holding classes. The number varied from 9 to 108.

The Sabha met quarterly, monthly or fortnightly, according to need. The raja could moreover, convoke it whenever "important matters concerning the welfare of the people" necessitated a session.

The sole aim of the monarch was to rule his people by acts of justice and moderation, Bhagvat Sinhjee declared—"to lead them on the path of duty and truth, and to satisfy them in every respect." Since it was necessary for him to gain the approbation of his subjects and rule with their consent he was called raja—one who tries to please.

A ruler could not commit an offence with impunity or even fail in his duty. If he did so he "had to undergo certain penance." He could escape public indignity by being permitted to perform the ceremony of expiation in private only if he had not committed a heinous crime against his people. If, on

the contrary, his transgression was grave, he had to suffer the humiliation of undergoing the penance in public.

If the crime was "of an unpardonable nature, the *Purohit*, with the consent of all the ministers and of the General Council, might depose him and place his eldest son upon the throne." Instances in which cruel kings were dethroned are not unknown in the Indian annals.

A raja who had been deposed "was kept under restraint;" but "his person was considered sacred." He was "never chained, flogged, mutilated or killed, for he was believed to be the representative of the preserving force of Nature, or the "Lord's Anointed," as the English call him.

No wonder that in the olden days the Indian sovereign "was the centre of all power, which could only be directed towards the good of the people."

The pledges given by Bhagvat Singhjee on the day of his investiture need to be read in conjunction with these statements to understand their full significance. The assumption of administrative powers did not, in his eyes, open the door to riches that he could enjoy as he liked, or to authority that he could wield at the dictate of caprice. It, on the contrary, placed in his hands the opportunity to do good to his subjects.

Strange though it may sound, he was inclined to believe that the system of governance obtaining in Britain was a modification of the one that prevailed in ancient India. "Of course," he noted, "there are differences, and very great differences too, between the two systems," the principal lying

"...in the fact that there is a limited monarchy in England, while he had an absolute monarchy in India. A sovereign without full

powers is no sovereign in the right sense of the word, and is not likely to call forth to the fullest extent the respect and loyalty of the subject population."

While in England he had noticed that the Crown exercised "very little real power under the present British Constitution." He deplored the effect of this limitation on the Indian mind.

A system of "absentee government" was not very congenial to the "tradition-bound people of India." According to him:

"The vast number of the ignorant masses do not know who their sovereign is. The viceroys and governors come and go like meteors, and they leave the people in still greater bewilderment. They want something to pour their phial of loyalty upon."

Considering these circumstances, he naively declared that it "would be the height of political wisdom" if "the Queen-Empress were to remove her residence from London to Bombay or Calcutta."

3

No raja holding such opinions could be expected to leave administration to his ministers. But in view of his youth and inexperience Bhagvat Sinhjee might, for a time at least, have contented himself with tackling the problems of day-to-day administration. These were, in all conscience, sufficiently heavy.

Grave problems inherited from the minority administration were however crying out to be solved. He could not shut his ears to them and rest in peace.

Life and property were, for instance, far from secure. Not that the people were of a turbulent disposition. Quite the reverse. They were generally peaceful, law-abiding citizens.

The State was, however, land-locked, intersected in many places by other territories that unfortunately were infested with gangs composed of men of marauding instincts. Some of these turbulent fellows persisted in troubling the quiet of Gondal whenever they could find or make the opportunity.

Some of them belonged to tribes that had migrated from Sindh and other places. Some were petty landlords who had run amuck, deliberately left their homes and taken to a life of dacoity to coerce the authorities into redressing their real or fancied grievances. In troublous times they would have made admirable soldiers; but since there was no fighting to do, they took to outlawry.

Certain expedients had been adopted during the minority regime to hold lawlessness in check. *Chaukidars* (guards) had been stationed on two of the principal roads within the Gondal limits. Each of them was held personally responsible for any crime and consequent loss of property in the zone under his care.

Despite such vigilance, highway robberies occurred every now and again. The dacoits would march in a body into a village, usually at night. They would pretend to be policemen on special duty and would overpower the *panvitas* (men holding land on a special tenure in consideration of which they performed police duty hereditarily—often spoken of as "irregular police") and go from house to house seizing cash, ornaments and other valuables. These affrays were often attended with bloodshed—sometimes with fatalities.

Even the mails which, in accordance with the treaties between the authorities in British India and Gondal, were entirely outside the Ruler's jurisdiction, were not sacrosanct in the estimation of these highwaymen. So often had the mail-runners and mail-carts

been attacked by them that during the minority regime a system of providing mounted escorts for them had been put in force at the behest of the Political Agent.

When the Thakore Sahib had been ruling six months a daring dacoity took place. Bandits armed with muskets and swords entered the village of Bholgamda at about seven o'clock in the evening and, after pinioning the *pranits*, created panic by firing aimlessly. The people fled for their lives, leaving the place in possession of the dacoits, who looted the village at their leisure and carried away with them property worth hundreds of rupees—the most prized belongings of the simple peasants.

Police officials hastened to the spot to investigate the matter. Separating into parties they combed the country-side for miles in every direction and succeeded in arresting nine bandits.

One of them who, on promise of receiving a free pardon, volunteered to disclose the plot, played a clever trick upon the police. He took them to his village in Junagadh. Leaving them outside, he entered the house. But instead of being shown the place where the loot was hidden the guardians of the law found themselves assailed by his kinsmen and confederates armed with swords and bludgeons.

During the *melee* that ensued, the approver escaped by a back door. After four months of unceasing effort, he was surprised not far from his village. He tried to get away on his spirited Kathiawar mare and probably would have managed to do so had not a stray shot struck him in the arm. Faint from loss of blood, his capture was effected.

Seven of the bandits were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. They broke out of jail a few months later, taking along with them a number of

other prisoners. The reign of terror that followed complicated the Thakore Sahib's administrative tasks.

A ruler who attached sanctity to life and property, as did Bhagvat Sinhjee, was bound to feel incensed at such occurrences. To add to his annoyance, malicious reports had been circulated that these daring crimes were perpetrated by his own subjects, some of whom did not confine their operations to his State.

He had careful investigations made into the records of the dacoits and discovered that the few Gondalis who took part in the outrages were usually minor characters, almost invariably working under the orders of some master-mind from across the border. It was an easy matter for the brigands to raid a Gondal village and then dash back to safety in their own States.

4

Lack of communications presented a grave problem at this time. The roads then existing, with the exception of a few short lengths that had been recently metalled, were little better than mud tracks. This description applied particularly to those connecting villages with one another and with marts.

It is difficult for one lacking first-hand knowledge of conditions then existing in Gondal to realize the agony involved in going from one place to another. Every yard or two apart stones rose above the layer of deep dust in which the roads were buried during the period of drought. In the rainy season the soft earth degenerated into thick, syrupy mud in which a cart sank up to its hubs. Travel resolved itself into a series of jerks as the patient bullocks, employed by the farmers for transport work in addition to ploughing, pulled it over a projecting stone, whence it rolled

immediately into a deep rut, only to pass again over a rough rock, and so on, time and again.

With few exceptions the streams and water-courses were left unbridged. The oxen had, in consequence, to pull heavily loaded carts up and down steep, often slippery, banks. Their lives must inevitably have been shortened by this terrible strain and the wear and tear on the carts must also have been great.

5

No one had troubled to dam up any of the streams for storing water for drinking or irrigation purposes. Little encouragement had been given to the farmers to sink wells. The principal system of land tenure was indeed so inequitable, as we shall see presently, that it held back improvements.

Agriculture was being pursued with out-of-date implements and methods. Towards the end of the minority regime Major Nutt had established *Kailas Bag* (a botanical garden), to which reference was made in the preceding chapter, and organized an annual agricultural exhibition. But the farmers looked upon them much as a child regards toy soldiers.

The means employed for dealing with agricultural products had known little change for centuries untold. Just one cotton gin existed in the State. It had been leased to a merchant from Surat.

6

The financial system, as Bhagvat Sinbjee inherited it, was chaotic. A large number of *peras* (imposts) were levied. They were either in the nature of surcharges upon land revenue, or petty taxes on persons engaged in handicrafts and the like.

These imports had behind them the sanction of long-standing custom and the universality of practice

in Kathiawar. Only mild protest against a new levy was possible as society functioned in the old days. Such agitation nearly always died almost as soon as it was born.

Rajas strongly disposed to follow the line of least resistance had therefore favoured this method of increasing their income. They found the device especially useful in respect of holding that, in consideration of stipulated services to be rendered ordinarily or on demand by their holders, or some other consideration, were entirely or largely exempt from taxation.

A multitude of taxes were demanded from the non-cultivating class. Everybody was made to pay so much for each hearth and threshold. Herdsmen were liable to a grazing tax.

The imposts were vexatious rather than oppressive. They lacked uniformity. Their incidence was irregularly distributed over society. Sections that could have borne increased burdens with ease escaped. Others that could ill afford to pay more were taxed.

During the minority regime some effort had been made to lump together these miscellaneous charges "in one clear revenue demand." *Jivaidars* and other landlords were opposed to this (*chokhabhag*) system because it benefited their tenants at their expense. They made it impossible to extend it to more than a few villages. Bhagvat Sinhjee therefore found the adjustment of these vexatious imposts of considerable urgency.

7

This problem was however small compared with the chaotic condition in which the land revenue—the principal source of the State income was derived. Several forms of tenure were current in Gondal.

They may be grouped broadly under two heads:

(1) Alienated land—

Most of this land had been given by the State at one time or another to *bhagats* related in some degree to the ruling dynasty, or persons who had helped the Raja to conquer the country or had rendered some other service to him.

The remaining land of this description was in the nature of religious *dharmada* (bequests). One ruler or another had attached it to a temple for its maintenance. The Thakores of Gondal had, from the beginning, been noted for their charitable disposition.

(2) Government or *khalas* land—

The Government claimed proprietorship in such land. The farmers living upon it were regarded as occupants. They were not allowed to transfer the occupancy rights they possessed and therefore had great difficulty in borrowing money when they needed it. If they sublet their property they had to hand over to the State half of the amount they received as rent.

The occupants did not possess the right of ownership even in the houses in which they lived or the sheds in which they kept their cattle or the yards in which those houses and sheds were located. The timber on such land was the property of the State and not a single tree could be cut down without permission from the authorities.

The tenants had no ownership rights in any improvements they might make in their holdings. If they levelled land, built fences or sunk wells, they did so in the knowledge that such additions automatically became the property of the State. They themselves could profit from them only to the extent of their own share in the increased yield that might result from them.

The knowledge prevented them from making much effort to improve their holdings. Individuals and the State suffered alike from the results of this system.

8

Persons in possession of alienated land paid little or nothing to the State. Such taxation as they were subject to was levied in the form of *udhad* (a lump sum) and was payable in cash.

The more important among the landholders did not deign to soil their hands with manual labour but leased out their land. The lessees were little better than chattels.

They had to submit to all sorts of exactions.

The landlord obtained, free of cost, most of the supplies he needed. The tenants gave him grass, fuel and ropes. The gardeners presented him with fruit and vegetables. The tanners supplied him with leather and nose-bags. The shepherds gave him sheep and goats. The potters contributed their mite in the form of tiles and water-vessels. Traders sent beds and bed-coverings. Craftsmen and labourers living on his estate had to perform any tasks that were set them, whenever he commandeered their services; and could claim no pay for such work. He levied fees at the time of marriages and deaths.

The State could do little to shield the poor wretches against exploitation. Intervention upon its part would be resented by the landlords, who would not hesitate to carry the complaint in an exaggerated form to the Political Agent.

9

The occupants of Government land paid their dues to the State partly in cash and partly in kind. The levy in cash was of comparatively recent origin,

having been imposed on top of the payment in grain—a system practically as old as the land itself.

This ancient form of tenure was known as *bhaghatai* (division of the produce between the cultivator and the owner). The share payable to the State was known as *vaje*.

The system as originally conceived had the merit of flexibility. If the god of rain smiled and the land yielded a bumper crop, the State as well as the farmer benefited. If Indra frowned however and the seeds became parched in the womb of mother earth, or he, in his wrath, sent down floods, or some other catastrophe, both parties suffered.

The cultivator was not compelled to pay revenue when he had been unable to garner any harvest. His liability to the State was strictly estimated in proportion to his gain.

Such was the case in theory. So many irregularities had however crept into this system prior to Bhagvat Sinhjee's assumption of power that the original intention was practically destroyed. The poor peasant was not permitted, for one thing, to sell even the smallest part of his crop until the State had received its share. Nor did the officials deign to repair to the threshing floor, determine the amount of corn that was the Government's due and make themselves responsible for taking it away. The entire output had to be carted to the nearest Government granary and remained there until the officials, at their pleasure, took what they considered to be the Raja's share and permitted the farmer to carry back the rest to his house.

Apart from the economic waste and vexation entailed by the double cartage, the system was open to abuse. The officials at whose mercy the cultivators were placed were inadequately paid. Favour was there-

fore readily bought and sold. Woe unto any farmer who had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of one of these petty czars.

Apart from making the most of the opportunity for themselves, the officials tried to win the approbation of their superior officers by assessing the State's share at a high rate. The man who, with the aid of his wife, children and other dependants, had laboured hard to produce the crop, found himself doubly fleeced.

It could not be said that the farmer's loss was always the State's gain. Officials seldom hesitated to pilfer. The men higher up, if themselves honest, were either apathetic or felt that their intervention would accomplish little permanent good. Thievery therefore went on unchecked.

Then, too, the corn appropriated to the State had to be disposed of. In the matter of adjudging quality, fixing the rates and checking weight, there was considerable room for collusion between the agents of the Government and the traders. The State lost a considerable amount of money through these leakages year by year.

As noted in Chapter VI., some attempt had been made during the minority to do away with this system and adopt the one prevailing in the British Indian districts. Upon completion of "the circuit and field survey of some of the villages," the administration introduced "*Khatabandhi* (the cash system of collecting revenue)." It did not prove to be "popular with the cultivators, and had to be abandoned" in favour of the "so-called *chokhabhag* system."

The Thakore Sahib had been in power only a few weeks when the hardships involved in the existing tenure became so obvious to him that he would

have liked to sweep aside the entire system at a single stroke.

To his disappointment, however, he found that the revenue administration, as handed over to him, left so much to be desired that he could not carry out the idea immediately. The records were so incomplete that it was impossible to ascertain the exact levy made in cash on parts of holdings devoted to cotton cultivation. Strive as the officials might, they could not determine the average of such taxation during the preceding five years upon which to base proposals for the introduction of a new system.

There was another difficulty hardly less stubborn to be faced. Persons who rendered services of various descriptions in the villages received their remuneration in corn and not in cash, or in some cases both in corn and cash. So long as the State received part of its revenue in kind, this system could be easily worked. With the realization of the entire revenue in cash however the State would either have to purchase corn in the open market or make some other arrangement for requiting the services of these men.

All the village servants did not, moreover, render service to the State. Many of them were, on the contrary, employees of the rural community and had, in fact, been paid all along in unthreshed corn by the tillers of the soil.

At the weighing shed the grain was separated into a number of heaps. In the days of Bhagvat Sinhjee's predecessors there had been so many of them that little was left for the cultivator when the time came to measure out his share of the harvest.

First of all there was the grain allotted to the palace establishment—the *kamdar no mapo* (manager's measure). Then there were the Bai's (the Rani's) and

the *Kunver's* (heir apparent's) shares and the portion set apart for the household servants.

There was one heap—about ten *soers* (pounds) in weight—extracted for the village *hapaldar* (constable). A similar quantity was set aside for the village weigher.

The State granary-keeper had his share, known as *Kharajut* (expenses). The Manager's servant received his *muthichapti* (a handful). The *patel* and others claiming the right took away *lhdla* (a lapful). The village craftsmen enjoyed a levy called *mapla* (a small measure). One *jhampe* (a heap) was hypothecated for entertaining village guests.

In addition to these taxes in kind, the farmer had to pay *sonis* on the plough or the *bigha* (less than one-third of an acre). The amount demanded per plough ranged from 5 to 35 rupees. A *bigha* was taken as the equal of one-sixtieth or one-hundredth of the value of a plough and the demand per *bigha* was therefore proportionately less.

If grain-pits were opened in seasons of scarcity, a special assessment was made. A tail-tax was collected on cattle—an impost for every wheel at every well.

In extraordinary times, when special expenditure had to be incurred, the *vero* was doubled for a year or two. Such a levy was known as a *dhubah* or as a *dhumba* (a thump on the back). Certainly a descriptive appellation.

It will be seen that a line had to be drawn to demarcate the onus of payment—whether by the State or by the village community or by individuals. Usage had to be respected and fair dealing given to the peasantry.

In view of all these complications the Thakore Sahib had to hold over this reform until he could improve the revenue administration and have the land under cultivation surveyed and classified.

In a sense graver than any of these problems were those connected with education. The Census taken while Bhagvat Sinhjee was still at the Rajkumar College had disclosed a deplorable state of affairs. There were comparatively few literate persons in the whole population. The number of women who could read and write was almost *nil*. There were hardly any literate men outside the towns.

The agency for ridding Gondal of the curse of illiteracy was utterly inadequate to the needs. There were only 30 schools in the whole State with an average daily attendance of less than 2,000 pupils. There was only one "Middle school." Not a single High school existed.

What was worse still, the new Ruler had no real control over the educational agency. It is true that in handing over the State the Bombay Government had not "reserved" the subject of education, to use the phraseology of to-day. Long before that transfer took place, however, certain arrangements had been entered into that vested control over educational matters in Gondal, as indeed in other Kathiawar States, in an *ad hoc* authority.

To understand just how this state of affairs had come about, it is necessary to turn the pages of history backwards.

At the time the British succeeded in establishing their supremacy over Kathiawar, education was sadly neglected. There were practically no schools in the peninsula other than those maintained as adjuncts to temples and mosques. Instruction of the most elementary type was imparted in these institutions by men who had received no specialized training for their work and who, almost without exception, possessed a narrow intellectual horizon.

Facilities for learning English did not exist even in towns. The deciphering of documents in that

language was akin to making out the meaning of a mystic formula. Each State generally employed a man whose principal qualification was his ability to render such service.

During the third quarter of the 19th century, when parents began to induce their boys to study English, they were not actuated by the desire for them to learn a language that would provide the key to a vast treasure-house of arts and sciences. Their motives were purely commercial. They had the shrewdness to realize that knowledge of English—the mother-tongue of the race that dominated India—had a marketable value.

The classes in whose hands power and wealth were concentrated were, as a rule, completely indifferent towards education in any language. That was specially the case in regard to the education of women. Persons who could afford it took pride in the fact that their women-folk "sat at home." Schooling being in their sight only a "bread-and-butter" proposition, was not necessary for girls.

Economic pressure compelled the farmers to employ women, generally on light work, in the fields. In their estimation learning was of no use in agriculture—if not actually harmful to it.

It would have been idle to expect the rulers, themselves unlettered, to take an intelligent interest in enlightening the minds of their subjects. If one of them had been told that provision of educational facilities on a liberal scale constituted an important obligation towards his subjects, he would have looked blank or more likely would have felt enraged at the impudence of his would-be mentor.

It naturally followed that even in the sixties of the last century only a minute fraction of the population in the towns in Kathiawar could read and write.

Farmers and artisans living in the country-side and women in urban as well as rural areas were almost *cent. per cent.* unlettered.

The officials stationed in Kathiawar by the Government of Bombay had tried to use their influence to remedy this sad state of affairs. By utilizing a small percentage of certain funds collected for other purposes and by appealing to the generous instincts of the Rajas, they had managed to open a central school at Rajkot. Educational institutions had also been established in some towns in the principal States.

As the inevitable result of such action, taken though it no doubt was with the best of intentions, control over education in all these territories became vested imperceptibly in the Political Agent, who had been persuaded by the Government of Bombay to act as the President of the Committee set up for promoting and superintending education in Kathiawar. The inspectorial staff, with the Director of Public Instruction at its head, though paid out of money subscribed in one form or another by the States, was actually a part of the Agency machinery.

By the time some of the Rajas awakened to the realization that in this way one of the most important functions appertaining to sovereignty had, for the time being, passed out of their hands, that system had become firmly established. Even if some one among them possessed the courage to ask the British to wind it up so far as his particular State was concerned, policy dictated patience.

The Agency might have deemed a particular Raja capable of directing the educational affairs of his State: but it hesitated to withdraw the special arrangements lest such withdrawal might cause complications elsewhere. An exception in favour of a progressive ruler might hurt the susceptibilities of the other

members of his Order who were not deemed worthy of being paid a similar compliment.

11

It is easy to imagine how a young administrator possessed of Bhagvat Sinhjee's sensitive nature felt in regard to this matter. As his *Journal* showed, he had returned from Europe filled with the desire to use education as a lever of progress.

In administering India, he wrote, the British Government worked upon the principle that education was "the chief factor in the elevation of a nation." The system adopted was however inefficient. It did not "answer so well as it should" because the rulers were trying to put "a wrong cap on a wrong head." It was impossible successfully to employ in India the "methods of imparting education obtaining in Europe," where the circumstances were entirely different. "Who does not know," he asked:

"...that in our public schools at present utility and simplicity are sacrificed to variety and complexity. A boy of a very tender age is coached in too many subjects, most of which are to be of no practical use to him in maturer years. It is better to know a good deal of one thing than a little of everything."

He had seen Europe "making great advances in the field of science." Numerous technical schools and colleges of science enabled thousands of young men in Britain and on the continent to occupy independent stations in life. He considered that it was "...even more essential that India should be overspread with such institutions."

Circumstanced as he was, he had no alternative but to bide the time when he would have undivided control over the educational system in his State. That happy consummation was not to occur for another decade and a half, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

Beginnings

1

Fitting the Navlakha Palace to serve modern requirements was like pouring new wine into old bottles. The result was far from satisfactory.

The Thakore Sahib had alterations made to the apartments he had chosen for his own use in the Palace, upon his return from Europe in November, 1883. Despite every effort, he did not feel comfortable. Life within the walled city irked him. He longed for a wide, open expanse where he could work quietly for the benefit of his people.

At one time he wished to build a new palace according to his own design. Upon consideration he felt however that the expenditure it would entail was not justified. Abandoning the idea, he moved to the bungalow vacated by Major Nutt.

The "Huzur Bungalow," as it was christened by the people, was fitted up to enable him to ordain his life according to the scheme he had worked out. This plan was an amalgam of the east and the west—an amalgam manufactured by himself to suit his needs.

2

To set his house in order he had already taken charge of the *Khangî* (household) Department and

was managing it with the help of the ladies of his family, much as any ordinary home would be conducted. The reform of the household was not even in that circumstance, an easy task.

Scores of questions had, for one thing, been left pending. Files bulging with voluminous and highly controversial correspondence had accumulated during his minority. He mastered them, one by one, passed orders and had the clutter cleared away.

His instructions were succinct. There was nothing vague about them to cause delay in carrying them out, or to necessitate further reference to him.

His interest extended to the point of personally examining the proofs of his orders after they had been set up in type. Woe to the compositor if he had been careless. The Thakore Sahib would not tolerate broken or worn out letters or wrong founts.

Custom, with its roots buried deep in the changeless past, cast a heavy shadow over his activities. He nevertheless made large cuts in the establishment. Some servants, past usefulness, were pensioned. Men who could be of service to the State in any capacity were drafted into the Police and other departments.

Till then Palace employees had been paid partly in cash and partly in rations. He increased the salaries and stopped the practice of issuing provisions, thereby bringing down the expenditure upon the *kothar* (provision store).

He could not see the utility of retaining in the *toshakhana* the large quantity of gold and silver ornaments that had accumulated there. According to the custom observed in his family, as elsewhere among the Rajput dynasties of those days, no lady would ever use the ornaments worn by a Rani who had died.

The superstition behind the custom was unshakable. The ladies could not be reasoned out of it. Nor

would any useful purpose have been served by winning their reluctant consent to wear the old ornaments, which were, as a rule, crudely made and not worth preserving as specimens of fine old workmanship.

Bhagvat Sinhjee therefore ordered that they be disposed of. Nearly Rs.85,000 were realized from their sale.

Extravagance of every description was banished from the household. A far simpler but much more wholesome mode of living was adopted.

Old people felt scandalized. They thought that by lowering standards the young Ruler would bring Rajaship into contempt.

There was something in his quiet, simple, dignified demeanour however that prevented his critics from carrying remonstrance to him. Even persons close to him held their peace, or if they entered a protest worded it diplomatically. He chose either to let time reconcile old-fashioned folks to his innovations, or laughed criticism out of court.

3

Everybody having claims upon him were however treated with liberality. He increased the *jivai* (allowance) paid to his own Ranis and made "a liberal cash assignment" to his brother Prithiraj's widow—the Bai Shree Bonjiba—in lieu of the village she was persuaded to hand back to the State.

He also arranged for the admission of his kinsmen—Kunvers Balubha and Bhaubha—into the Rajkumar College and promised to meet all expenditure incurred upon their education from the State Exchequer.

Nor was he remiss in acknowledging his gratitude to his *alma mater*. He contributed Rs.25,000 towards the endowment fund, gave Rs.5,000 for the purchase of books and bookcases and Rs.2,500 for establishing

the Gondal prize of Rs.100 a year to be awarded "to the first *runner* in the first class."

4

Love for horse-flesh that every Rajput inherits made him transfer the stud established during his minority from the State to the Household Department. Two fine Arab horses were purchased and their services given to owners of mares on application. A fine jackass was also procured for breeding mules and another for improving the strain of donkeys. A little later a very handsome horse named Maharaj was obtained from the Thakore Sahib of Palitana.

At first the impression spread that the State had some ulterior motives, and the people did not much avail themselves of the facilities provided. Once this idea was eradicated however stallions were in great demand and were taken from place to place for the convenience of owners. At the horse-show at Rajkot in 1884, Gondal won five first-class prizes.

Not satisfied with the stud farm built during his minority, the Thakore Sahib, some years later, had the paddock removed to a piece of waste land near the railway station, reclaimed for the purpose. The fence built round it was of stone quarried from within the State. It cost more than Rs.11,000; but the money went back to the people in the form of wages. As will be seen later, the desire to develop industries in Gondal by using local materials and labour became intensified in Bhagvat Sinhjee with years.

5

The same energy was shown in improving the administrative machinery. Fortunately for him, one of the key-positions—the Revenue Commissioner's post—was vacant at the time of his investiture. He could

therefore make his own selection. He obtained from the Bombay Government the loan of the services of a competent official (Rao Sahib Krishnashankar Lalshankar Dave) and asked him to make an investigation into the revenue system and submit proposals for its reorganization.

Shortly afterwards two Revenue Assistants were appointed for detailed supervision of the work of collecting assessments and crediting the amount collected to the Treasury. They were given a horse allowance and were kept constantly on the move to check irregularities and prevent injustice.

The Revenue Commissioner was directed to simplify the loose and crude method of levying dues for holdings and to introduce a systematic process of computation. The State Vakil was asked to assist him. After investigation and consultation they both declared that the task was impossible.

The Thakore Sahib thereupon himself prepared skeleton forms, worked out the figures on a scaled basis and entered them in their appropriate places, to serve as samples. As the result of the system he devised a large amount of complicated and long-drawn-out correspondence was done away with.

This was in the nature of a stop-gap. A little later a special department was created for surveying land all over the State and making a new settlement that ultimately put an end to the vagaries of the *bhaghatai* system.

6

Feeling that officials with some knowledge of farming were needed, an "Agricultural Class" was opened in August, 1886. Mr. Mulchand Jadavji Bhavada, a graduate in agriculture from the Saidapet (a Madras suburb) College, was placed in charge of

it and, under the Ruler's personal supervision, worked out a practical scheme of studies.

Young men carefully selected by means of a stiff examination, studied physics, chemistry and agronomy in class-rooms and laboratories specially fitted for the purpose. They were taught, in addition, Gujarati (the language in which accounts were kept and correspondence was conducted), arithmetic, mensuration, field surveying and office work.

Practical training in agronomy, vegetable gardening and horticulture was given on the Horticultural and Experimental Farm, consisting of eight acres. The students learnt, through practical demonstration, the utility of employing better implements and the need for improving the breeds of milch and draught cattle. Those who, at the end of two years' training, passed the prescribed test, were promised employment.

A class was also opened for training *talatis* (village accountants), who play an important part in the collection of land revenue. Their efficiency or otherwise therefore affects the entire administration.

7

The Thakore Sahib organized a Forest Department to speed up arboriculture. The rate at which road-side trees were being planted appeared to him unduly tardy. A longing to relieve the bare appearance of the State had tugged at his heart ever since he had caught his first glimpse of Gujarat.

He placed at the head of the new department Mr. Valubhram Mulji, an energetic official who had been trained in forest conservancy and whose services he borrowed from the Government of Bombay. He allotted money for preserving such plantations as existed, gave him powers to acquire waste lands for creating new reserves and had hundreds of *maunds* of

babul and other seeds that flourished in arid soil imported from Sindh, much of which was then a desert, and planted on hill sides and other waste places.

Rules for the conduct of forest administration were drafted by the Superintendent in consultation with the Revenue Commissioner, who till then had been responsible for administering forests. The Thakore Sahib examined and amended the draft and kept an eye over the work.

As was almost inevitable, the new establishment and the Revenue Department came into conflict. The villagers also regarded with hostility the work of forest conservancy, which militated against the grazing of their cattle and their cutting *babul* trees for making and repairing implements. The Thakore Sahib's intervention was often sought and from time to time he had to make modifications in his forest policy to ease the situation.

8

A beginning was made in increasing the efficiency of the police. At the recommendation of the Police Superintendent, Mr. Madhav Rao Pandurang, who had distinguished himself in putting down dacoity in the Bombay Presidency, certain changes were made in the organization of the constabulary. An examination for officials was instituted and a small body of detectives was created to "watch the doings of suspected characters, and pursue enquiries under circumstances which render the employment of men in uniform undesirable.

The police, acting in concert with the magistracy, displayed great tact during *Dassera* (the Hindu festival held annually in commemoration of Shree Ramachandra's victory over Ravana, the ten-headed, twenty-armed, king of Lanka). It coincided with the Muslim

Tazia (celebration that marks the anniversary of the battle of Kerbala in Arabia, fought soon after the foundation of Islam). As there had been considerable friction between the Hindus and Muslims during the minority régime, fears were entertained lest collision may occur between the two sections of the people at this time, when their emotions were wrought up to a high pitch by religious fervour. Nothing untoward occurred however.

Great tact was also shown in bringing about an amicable settlement of a long standing dispute between the Avulkunver of Junagadh and the State. A payment of Rs.12,000 put an end to costly litigation, involving Rs.5,00,000.

9

The Thakore Sahib's desire to place his capital on the railway map led him to make a thorough-going investigation into the matter. He knew that in the existing conditions it was hopeless to expect any private agency to engage, at its own risk, in building railways. In 1871 a line from Gogo to Gondal had, for instance, been planned by a group of individuals: but the project was still-born. If his subjects were to enjoy the benefits of a rapid system of communication, as he wished them to do, he would have to take the initiative. He felt moreover that any State solicitous of the people's welfare could not hand over concessions for building public utilities to an outside agency that had no interest in the concern except the dividends it derived.

He could remember the coming of the "steel horse" into the peninsula. He was eight years of age when the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway Company had pushed the line from Ahmedabad to Wadhwan—only 29½ miles within Kathiawar limits.

About this time a proposal was afoot to build a railway from Veraval in the south to Dhoraji *via* Junagadh. The line had been surveyed; but the Junagadh authorities expressed their inability to finance construction and the scheme had to be abandoned for the time being.

Two years later (1874) another project had been framed. It aimed at extending the railway to the south-east by connecting Bhavnagar with Wadhwan. It also failed to mature.

Fortunately the impasse did not last long. Following the Maharaja's death, a minority régime was set up in Bhavnagar and the Joint Administrators (Colonel J. W. Watson and Azam Gavrishankar Udeyshankar, C. S. I.) deploring the lack of railway communications, directed the Executive Engineer to make a survey for a line to run through that State. The minority administration in Gondal took a like view and a supplementary survey was undertaken there.

The Government of India, then pursuing a policy of railway construction deemed vigorous for that time, looked with favour upon these efforts and had a project prepared to carry the Bhavnagar and Gondal line to the railhead at Wadhwan. A through connection would thus be provided from the south-eastern extremity of Kathiawar to Bombay.

The first sod was turned on March 20, 1879 and the main line was opened for traffic by Sir James Fergusson on December 18, 1880. A month later Dhoraji was linked up with it.

It cost Rs. 96,25,000 and was 201 miles in length. Bhavnagar and Gondal shared the expenditure in the proportion roughly of two-thirds and one-third.

The Government of India deputed an engineer to serve as the Manager and Engineer-in-Chief of the line. He was to work under the control of a committee

composed of a representative from each of the two proprietary States, presided over by the Political Agent at Rajkot.

As Bhagvat Sinhjee stated on a subsequent occasion, the name applied to this line was a misnomer. Only a small portion of it ran through Gondal territory and that not the most productive part. It came nowhere near the capital, which, depending upon means of communication old, slow and inconvenient, was little more than an overgrown village.

10

He was therefore anxious to connect his seat of government with some junction in Kathiawar and through that junction with the rest of the world. He had two alternative schemes in mind. The line could be extended either from Khakharia or Vavdi to Gondal.

Even if the concurrence of the Government of India were not essential, as it was, before he could commission the building of a railway, his innate caution made him order an investigation into the project. With this end in view he appointed, in 1885, three of his most experienced officials—Mr. Ganesh Govind, the State Engineer, Mr. Krishnashankar Lalshankar, the Revenue Commissioner, and Mr. Prabhashankar Motiram Buch, the State Vakil:

(1) to enquire into the desirability of railway extension at the sole expense of the State; and

(2) if the commissioners deemed such extension to be in the public interest, to recommend whether the project of building a line from the Khakharia or Vavdi railway station to the capital, or some other line, was advisable.

After going into the question, they expressed the opinion:

"...that under the existing circumstances, it is desirable that this State should undertake at its own sole cost an extension of the Gondal branch of the Bhavnagar-Gondal Railway in such a way as to run through and benefit a portion of the territory belonging to the State, provided however that the undertaking should be able to pay its way and to yield besides a moderate interest on the capital expended by the State exchequer."

The commissioners rejected both the alternatives placed before them by their Ruler. In so doing they showed that they were convinced the man from whom they took their orders was not the ordinary type of a Raja who considered his word sacrosanct; but was imbued with the desire to choose a scheme best calculated to conduce to his subjects' interests.

Two other choices lay before them—the building of a line—

- (a) from Gondal to Jetalsar, or
- (b) from Dhoraji to Upleta and thence to Bhayavadar.

They favoured the Gondal-Jetalsar alignment and made out a strong case in support of it. Judged from the "political" point of view that line would be best, inasmuch as

"...firstly, it would secure a direct communication by rail in the shortest possible way, between the capital of the State and Dhoraji, which is the most important place in our territory;

"secondly, it would make a junction with the Bhavnagar-Gondal Railway at a point which is situate in our own territory, and where again the line proposed to be constructed by Junagadh State would also join;

"thirdly, it would connect the capital of the State with Bombay and other places by direct rail communication; and

"fourthly, it would contribute in a marked manner towards transforming Jetalsar into a flourishing emporium of trade and traffic in the near future."

The Gondal-Jetalsar line could also be constructed most economically. The mileage would be much the same, whichever alternative were adopted: but there "would be no bridge to build on the Gondal-Jetalsar line if the existing bridge over the Bhadar near Jetpur could be utilized. Since the Bhadar was the largest river in the State and during the monsoon was subject to floods, a considerable saving could be thus effected.

The authors of this memorandum were further of opinion that the cost of the earthwork on the Gondal-Jetalsar line would be smaller than on any other route, "since portions of the existing metalled road from Gondal to Jetalsar could conveniently be utilized." They therefore "hoped that it would be possible for the Political Agent to help Gondal by obtaining the use of those portions of the road and also of the Bhadar Bridge...without the payment of any compensation."

The commissioners admitted however that in respect of the financial return the Dhoraji-Upleta-Bhayavdar line would be the most advantageous. It would "tap one of the richest cotton-growing districts in Kathiawar," and also attract, to a considerable extent, traffic from the south-eastern parts of the Navanagar State.

But, they argued, the Gondal-Jetalsar line "would also pass through a rich country" and attract goods and passengers from several neighbouring States. It

would constitute an important link between the south and Rajkot—the political nerve-centre of Kathiawar. It was therefore not likely to be very much less paying and would "return a moderate amount of interest on the outlay," and in view of the smaller cost on construction, they were "inclined on the whole to pronounce in favour of it."

The Thakore Sahib sent copies of the committee's memorandum to some of his European friends familiar with the country, confident that they would back up the project recommended by his commissioners. Without a single exception they expressed the opinion that railway extension in Gondal was advisable and, on the whole, agreed with the committee's suggestion.

Lieutenant-Colonel Nutt wrote, for instance:

"As regards the question as to which would be the best line from Gondal, I am inclined to agree with your committee that a connection with Jetalsar would be the best, as you will then be all right for making that place one of very considerable importance."

He counselled the Thakore Sahib to have the land in Jetalsar "carefully surveyed and mapped into building plots." He was certain that the railway lines would traverse it at "right angles" and it would "become a very important junction." He therefore urged that:

"...everything should be arranged beforehand as regards its laying out. Broad roads with good bazaars all laid out ready for occupation by settlers who will soon make their appearance. The water-supply will have to be seen to at once. Of course the line will afterwards go on to Rajkot: that is only a matter of time."

The project however hung fire. The Government of India favoured the building of another line designed

to carry the railway to the south-western extremity of Kathiawar, reference to which will be made in Chapter X.

11

While Bhagvat Sinhjee was grappling with such problems, death crept into his household and carried away the Rani Bai Sahib Ba, a lady with a sweet and gentle disposition. She was related to him by ties of blood as well as marriage. He grieved greatly over her loss.

Almost immediately after her cremation, on August 3, 1885, he began planning a memorial in her honour. A monument of stone on which her name and the dates of her birth and death were chiselled, with a prayer for her soul to rest in peace, did not appeal to him as adequate. He wished to give it a form that would keep her memory alive.

The scheme he evolved enabled him to create an institution the like of which did not exist in Kathiawar. Though the charitable impulse was not wanting, there was no place in the State where indigent persons could be cared for. During his tour in Europe he had become impressed with the need of organizing charity and had written:

"In England care is taken to bestow charity on those only who are really needy and quite unable to work for themselves, and not on those who are stout and able to earn their livelihood by manual labour. Begging in the streets is made penal. I think some such act is necessary in India, where street beggars are often very troublesome. I am always in favour of helping the infirm and the destitute."

Before beggary could be banned there must be institutions in which homeless persons could find

refuge. He desired to establish an asylum that would provide shelter for the blind, the maimed, the crippled, the infirm—any one and every one who was incapable of standing by himself or herself, regardless of age, sex, creed, race or nationality—whether friend or foe. The Rani Sahiba's name would thus endure in the hearts and upon the lips of grateful men, women and children who would there find a haven from the cruelties of the world.

The institution was not to be a poor-house in the ordinary sense of the word. Nor was it to be a workhouse, where everybody would be made to perform some kind of task more or less tiring. While not intended to enable indolent persons to live comfortably without work, it was not to force weaklings to toil. But all able-bodied persons requiring assistance were to engage in hand-spinning and weaving or other light labour that would make them self-supporting within the Asylum.

The Public Works Department soon had the plans ready for erecting a series of detached buildings on an extensive piece of ground outside the capital, situated along a pleasant stretch of the Gondli, allotted by the Thakore Sahib for the purpose. The cost was expected to be Rs.16,000; but improvements and additions suggested themselves as the work proceeded and the original estimate was greatly exceeded.

The need for the institution was so pressing that before it was completed temporary arrangements had to be made for dealing with urgent cases. By increasing the number of masons and labourers, the State Engineer was able to have it ready for the formal opening early in 1886.

It provided board, lodging, clothing and medical relief—in fact, every necessity of life—for persons admitted into it. By housing the various castes in

separate wards, it was possible to accommodate even those regarded as the lowliest of the lowly without wounding the susceptibilities of those who considered themselves to be high-born.

Under the rules framed by the Thakore Sahib a Managing Committee appointed by him conducted affairs. Dr. Bhow Shirkay, placed at its head, was kind-hearted but wide-awake. He could be trusted to be merciful without permitting himself to be imposed upon.

The attendants never knew when he would descend upon them. They kept the place as scrupulously clean as a ward in a modern hospital. Nothing in any way offensive was permitted within its precincts.

From 50 to 60 men and women were cared for in the Asylum. There was no hard and fast rule as to the number to be taken in and red-tape was not permitted to hinder the acceptance of an application for admission; provided a certificate for incapacity for earning livelihood was duly submitted.

12

Towards the end of 1885 friends who, for nearly two years, had been trying to persuade the Thakore Sahib to publish his *Journal of a Visit to England in 1883*, succeeded in their efforts. As he stated in the preface he penned, he feared that the public might think he wished to strut out as an author. The *Journal*, he explained, related to matters more of personal than of general interest. It did not pretend to supply any new information: but was a bare record of things seen by him from day to day during a hurried tour of six months duration, with a few remarks here and there which might be taken for what they were worth.

The Education Society's Press in Byculla, a suburb of Bombay long since swallowed up by that

growing city, to which he entrusted the printing and binding, turned out a neat volume. That fact was noticed by several reviewers in the Indian and British press.

Newspapers in both countries were struck with his "fluent and readable style." (*The Indian Statesman*.) The *Sunday Review* credited him with being "a master of English."

The writer of a lengthy review in the *Indian Spectator* (Bombay)—probably Mr. Behramji M. Malabari, himself no mean stylist—remarked that the book

"...teems with classical and historical allusions doing credit to his scholarship, and with refined sentiments and reflections characteristic of the Oriental gentleman."

His natural, unaffected style impressed critics. As the *Dundee Advertiser* observed:

"This book is in many respects valuable; chiefly it is of worth because it is so natural. It does not say what the Prince might have been prompted to remark. Every line of it is his own, and this is shown, too, by the absence of art in concealing his real sentiments."

The Thakore Sahib's modesty pleased the reviewers. The *Times of India* (Bombay)—British owned and edited then as now—felt that the book was all the better for that quality. It was sure that "some future Horace Walpole will have to include the young Thakore Sahib of Gondal in the Dictionary of Royal and Noble Authors," in which he would indeed be assigned "no mean place." It had no doubt that his trip to

"...that small and interesting country which is lying 6,000 miles off and holds in her hand the future destiny of the vast Indian Continent, will have a marked and beneficial effect upon his whole career."

It noted with pleasure that he was "clearly none the worse a Hindu for his appreciation of Englishmen at home."

His fair-mindedness and moderation were generally appreciated. According to the *Indian Daily News*, (Calcutta) for instance, he did not "rush into extremes in praise of one system or depreciation of another:" but balanced "the merits of each in a reasonable way."

Similarly the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* (London)—the organ of the Royal Asiatic Society, in whose activities the Thakore Sahib took interest—wrote that he had shown himself "a shrewd, as well as friendly critic."

The editorial writer of the *New Review* observed:

"In spite of all the kindness and proofs of friendship which he received from the English and of the great esteem in which he holds that nation, he does not refrain from much adverse criticism; while on the other hand, naturally predisposed in favour of India and its ancient culture, he censures the weaknesses and defects of his own people with a frankness and freedom beyond all praise. His occasional studies together form a complete picture, in which a prominent place is given to whatever is good, beautiful, and creditable to his native land."

Herr Arminius Vambery, a learned Hungarian Jew, then something of a lion in certain literary circles in Britain commented:

"He lauds what is to be lauded and blames what is to be blamed. He manifests the British spirit of free judgment and pays homage to the principle of 'fair play' in most of his judgments.

"...in general he does not hesitate to acknowledge the advantage of Western culture over

that of the East." Supplement to the *Allgemeine Zeitung* Munich.

The last remark was in the nature of the wish being father to the thought.

Indian writers were delighted to find that the Motherland was so near to the Thakore Sahib's heart—that education modelled upon the Western pattern and foreign travel had not alienated him from his own culture. The *Indian Echo* noted:

"...While in England the author is always thinking of India, and not always despondently. In fact, out of all his admiration one fact stands out pre-eminent, his almost passionate love of his native land. English education and English society have failed to denationalize him."

The *Indian Statesman* remarked:

"...the Thakore Sahib's education and travels have not destroyed his love and veneration for what is best and worthiest of imitation in the institutions of his own country. He is still at heart an Indian Prince, whose mind has been enlarged but not paralysed by personal association with the products of Western civilization. In every case, he has endeavoured to judge how far they were suitable to his fellow-countrymen in India, and though we may not always agree with his opinions it is impossible to admire too much the manly independence of character, which refuses to flatter the rulers of India by indiscriminate praise of their national peculiarities. The perusal of the Diary has left on our minds a most pleasing impression of its author, and we trust he will some day find scope for the exercise of his abilities beyond the confines of his small principality of Gondal."

Whether friendly or otherwise, the critics had to acknowledge that the Thakore Sahib did not conform to the ideas that most non-Indians had of a Raja. As the *Sunday Review* felicitously stated:

"This genial potentate is not at all like Sir Walter Scott's typical Oriental Prince—

'Stately, stern, and mute—'

nor does he at all resemble the effeminate, panther-like Rajas of whom so many portraits have been drawn by pen and pencil. He laughs at sea-sickness; he delights in lawn-tennis; he is good at bicycling and he is not too proud to drive through London on the top of an omnibus. He is fearless and candid as a schoolboy in the expression of his likes and dislikes."

The praise bestowed upon the volume pleased the Thakore Sahib all the more because he, in his modesty, had not expected it. He had set down brief notes of incidents in the course of his "grand tour" and the sights he had seen, only as a matter of record. He had no idea that this record would win him admission into the ranks of authors. He appeared to be genuinely surprised that it did.

CHAPTER IX

Medical Studies

1

A press correspondent who visited Gondal in the middle of February, 1886, has left behind a pen-picture of its Ruler. "The Thakore Sahib was fair and healthy," he wrote. He preferred "his bungalow outside of the town, for the sake of fresh air," to his palace in the heart of the capital. He insisted upon looking "after everything himself" and had "divided his hours of business, fixing a time for Government work." Education interested him. Science attracted him specially. He had built up "a splendid library and was a constant reader."

I derived a similar impression from Mr. Bezonji during my first visit to Kathiawar, early in 1911. The ex-Chief Karbhari was then considered to be old, but possessed great mental vigour.

According to him, the Thakore Sahib, as a young man, was inclined to be reserved. He was more ready to elicit than to impart information. Somewhat slow to come to a decision, he was firm once he had arrived at one. He knew his own mind exceedingly well. He was suave in his manners and soft-spoken.

His years at the Rajkumar College and particularly his tour in Europe, from which he had returned some nine months prior to his investiture,

had developed in him a strong disposition to regard the west as a pattern to copy in many respects. Fortunately however he was deeply devoted to his mother-tongue.

He knew something of the institutions that prevailed in ancient and mediæval India; and entertained a great respect for the genius of his own people. This love for the past prevented him from swinging too far out of the Indian into the European orbit.

He was disposed, nevertheless, to compare conditions in Gondal with those abroad—almost invariably to Gondal's disadvantage. He particularly deplored the lack of sanitation in the capital and Dhoraji, not to speak of the smaller towns and villages. The utter inadequacy of the medical and educational systems distressed him. The paucity of communications, the primitive implements and methods used in agriculture, the absence of stimulus for the development of industries, filled his mind with serious thought. He deplored the self-satisfaction and aloofness of the officials. They considered their work done when they had attended to duties of a purely routine nature. There was hardly any agency at work in the whole State attempting to rouse the people out of their inertia.

He wished to see changes made in all directions. But, deliberate far beyond his years, he was able to possess his soul in patience until he could discuss matters with his officials and with the people—the commonest among them—and devise practical ways and means for effecting reforms.

Even after he had formulated his ideas, he would get in touch with persons likely to oppose them. All the difficulties that were likely to be encountered could be thus anticipated before final shape was given to a measure.

His cautious spirit prevented mistakes—enabled him to avoid failure. It helped him, moreover, to carry with him people who were extremely conservative. Precipitancy upon his part might easily have frightened them and probably made them positively perverse.

With all the care he took, he now and again found that he had wandered into a path where his subjects could not or would not follow him; and he had, in consequence, to retrace his steps. More interested in their welfare than in his own prestige, he, in such a contingency, calmly gave up any adventure which did not give promise of finding favour with them.

2

While grappling with administrative problems, the Thakore Sahib yearned to improve his own intellectual equipment. Reading in the quiet of his study did not satisfy him. The advice that Dr. Mackby had given him in 1883 "to come to Oxford some day and be attached for some time to one of the colleges to complete his education," kept echoing in his memory.

He longed to study medicine. The art of healing had exercised a great fascination over his mind from the first moment he had stepped into a hospital.

When he visited the medical schools attached to the Edinburgh University he wrote in his diary:

"I have a taste that way and should much like to become a medical student myself."

He wished to be a doctor so that he "might have the personal satisfaction of relieving poor people from the diseases which flesh is heir to." So he wrote, a few weeks later, when visiting St. George's Hospital in London, and continued:

"It is a most charitable profession if the doctor cares more for his patients than for his purse.

Of all the callings in the world there is none which admits of a greater scope for exercising one's sense of benevolence than the medical profession."

He asked himself why he should not proceed to Britain and make a systematic study of medicine. It would satisfy his heart's desire and at the same time fit him to be a better Ruler.

All sorts of diseases, he knew, prevailed in his State. Every now and again *Shitta Devi*—the goddess of smallpox—became enraged at some act of commission or omission upon the part of the people (as they thought) and demanded her toll of human life; or cholera swept the country. Fevers—a term comprehending many diseases—prevailed. Eye diseases were common.

Specialized knowledge in the curative sciences should, he considered, be of great utility to him and to his people. He would be better able to organize medical relief and to fight epidemics.

Knowledge of preventive medicine, to which increasing importance was being attached, would even be more helpful. Insanitary conditions prevailed everywhere in the State and nothing was being done to educate the people in sanitary habits.

3

One great difficulty stood in his way. The medical course at a University was lengthy. Even though he would use his absence to secure education that would directly and, even more so, indirectly benefit his people, he felt that he could not remain away from them for years. But could he not go away for a short time and learn at least the rudiments of medicine and surgery and, upon his return, extend his knowledge by continuing his studies at home?

He was quite sure that the plan was feasible. In Bezonji he had a Chief Karbhari who was both capable and trustworthy. He also had confidence in the officials at the head of the Revenue, Judicial and other Departments. They would have no difficulty in carrying on the day-to-day administration during his absence. Papers involving questions of importance could be sent to him and he could telegraph his orders in cases of urgency.

Instead of interposing any objection, the Governor of Bombay smoothed his way. Sir James Fergusson had taken almost a paternal interest in him ever since he first met him in 1884 and had honoured him by appointing him, on January 1, 1885, a Fellow of the Bombay University.

4

On March 26, 1886, the Thakore Sahib sailed from Bombay. He was accompanied by Mr. P. S. V. Fitzgerald, who had been deputed by the Bombay Government to act as his cicerone. He proceeded direct to Edinburgh, since he had been greatly impressed with the facilities afforded by the Medical College of the University there and proposed to join it in preference to any other.

He made up his mind from the very start that he would accept no indulgence from the authorities on account of his rank. He would insist upon living and working as any other student.

If some of his fellow students thought that he would not have a stomach for the gruesome sights and offensive stinks of the dissecting room, or that he would not relish treating patients afflicted with sores running with pus, his conduct soon made them change their minds. With his apron over his clothes, he went about the wards as did the other students, making

notes and sometimes assisting in dressing wounds, many of them septic.

Practical work held greater interest for him than theories, though he hardly ever missed a lecture. Administrative experience had already taught him that knowledge was useful only if it could be applied to the actualities of life.

5

Now and again events occurred that distracted his mind from his medical studies. Hardly had he, for instance, settled down to serious work when he received news of a daring outbreak of prisoners from the jail in Gondal, where the bandits found guilty of looting Bholgamda on June 1, 1885, had been incarcerated. Two sentries and a sowar who pursued them had been killed.

Three of these notorious desperadoes, including the ring-leader Syed Alimiya, he was informed, had been recaptured. They had been tried and executed. A fourth member of the gang—a Bhavnagar subject—had however made good his escape.

Another run-away was later recaptured by the Gondal police, tried and sentenced to transportation for life. A notorious fellow was killed in a skirmish with the constabulary.

The five brigands left at large joined hands with desperadoes. They took a blood-curdling oath to wreak revenge on the Gondal police by doing as much harm as they could to villages under Bhagvat Sinhjee's jurisdiction.

It was a great comfort to the Thakore Sahib that he had left an experienced and strong official in charge of the State who could be depended upon to rise to such an occasion. Mr. Bezonji was, in fact, so devoted to him that he dealt with affairs on his own responsibility

and refrained, as far as possible, from sending up papers that would trouble him.

5

Some eighteen months later the members of his Order in Kathiawar requested him to represent them at the Jubilee of Queen Victoria, shortly to be held. Nothing could have pleased him more. He had entertained great regard for Her Majesty ever since he had been presented to her four years earlier.

The Jubilee celebrations attracted visitors from all parts of the world. Bhagvat Sinhjee met some of them and took the opportunity to learn from them how life was regulated and administration was conducted in other countries.

In anticipation of the celebration the Queen-Empress had reconstituted and extended the Order of the Indian Empire "so as to enable Her Majesty, her heirs and successors to reward a greater number of persons who, by their services, official or other, to Her Majesty's Indian Empire merited the Royal favour." Bhagvat Sinhjee's name figured at the head of Indians deemed worthy of admission to "the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire" as a "Knight Commander."

He had the additional honour of being invested by Her Majesty, who pinned the insignia upon his breast with her own hands.

The conferment of this honour upon him was welcomed in his University town. In writing of it the *Scotman* (Edinburgh) proudly remarked:

"Sir Bhagvat Sinhjee is a student of distinction at the University in Edinburgh and the first ruling prince who has come to this country for study."

From the Jubilee celebrations in London, Bhagvat-Sinhjee went back to his studies with renewed zest. Had he been his own master he would have stayed on until he had secured his medical degree: but his concept of a Raja's obligation to his subjects would not let him do so. Teachers and fellow students alike were sorry to part from him.

The Senate of the Edinburgh University, by a cordial and unanimous vote, accorded him the degree of LL.D. on the eve of his departure. The presentation took place at the spring graduation ceremony held in the United Presbyterian Synod Hall on April 20, 1887.

Professor Kirkpatrick, who officiated, remarked that:

"...he (Bhagvat Sinhjee) was imbued with a love of science; and in recognition of his exemplary quest of knowledge, the Senatus desired to enroll him among their honorary Doctors of Law."

The statement was greeted with loud and prolonged cheers.

In congratulating him the Principal, Sir William Muir, wrote that the conferment of this degree was "a sufficient token of the estimation in which you were held; of the devotion with which you gave attention at the Scientific and Atonomical classes and of the progress made by you."

He carried back with him to Gondal the esteem of his teachers. Professor William Turner, under whom he studied Anatomy, commended him for "his diligence and patience and the quiet enthusiasm with which he pursued his studies both in Anatomy and in several other branches of medical education."

Dr. T. Grainger Stewart, Professor of the Practice of Physic and of Clinical medicine, certified that his

"...attendance at the systematic lectures on medicine was absolutely regular, and his intelligent appreciation of the questions involved in its study excited my lively admiration. In the wards of the Royal Infirmary he picked up the points of interest in the different cases with great rapidity; and I am satisfied that had his duties not called him to other kinds of work he would have proved a very able physician."

Mr. John Chiene, Professor of Surgery, was "of opinion that he had a firm grasp of the broad principles underlying the Practice of Surgery," judging from the questions he asked and from the conversations he had with him.

Mr. Thomas Annandale, Regius Professor of Clinical Surgery, wrote that the Thakore Sahib, when studying at the University, "was a most diligent pupil at the Royal Infirmary." The young Ruler had regularly attended his demonstrations and operations and "took a most intelligent and thorough interest in connection with Practical Surgery."

Dr. A. R. Simpson, Professor of Midwifery and Diseases of Women and Children, declared that Bhagvat Sinhjee "was very regular in his attendance and evinced a great interest in the subject of the Lectures." He had "also availed himself diligently of opportunities of practical instruction in the Gynecological Ward of the Royal Infirmary and in the Royal Maternity and Simpson Memorial Hospital;" and from the many interviews he had with him he was "persuaded that he acquired a very praiseworthy and practical knowledge of this important branch of medicine."

His Highness was enthusiastically received, upon landing in Bombay from the *S. S. Bokhara* on August 13,

1887, by a deputation sent from the State. On his journey to Gondal he was welcomed by relations and friends at the railway platforms of Nowsari, Surat, Nadiad, Ahmedabad, Wadhwan, Chuda, Lathi and Jetpur.

The station at Jetpur was specially decorated in his honour with flags and evergreen plants and a deputation of representative citizens from Dhoraji presented him with an address. The Thakore Sahib thanked them for all the trouble they had taken and told them that he was as delighted to see them as they were to see him. He could not, he declared, easily forget the marks of loyalty on the part of his subjects, who had been good enough to send representatives to Bombay to receive him.

Since Jetpur marked the terminus of the railway at that time, the Thakore Sahib had to complete his journey by carriage. At his capital, 20 miles distant, he had another enthusiastic reception. According to a newspaper account, young and old turned out to greet him in the familiar Oriental fashion and the joy of the people knew no bounds.

A long and stately procession escorted the "idol of the people," through the illuminated streets to the library, where a congratulatory address was presented to him. In his reply he said:

"I am obliged to you for the enthusiastic reception you have given me. I most fully appreciate your congratulations. I have every reason to be satisfied with my second visit to Europe, especially as I had an opportunity of taking a personal share in the Jubilee celebrations in England. You must have read accounts of the rejoicings and excitement of the English people on that occasion. But it is very difficult to have a correct idea of the spectacle without seeing it. You will be glad to learn that Her Majesty

the Queen-Empress has shown me very great kindness. In conclusion I thank you again for your good wishes."

The procession proceeded towards the Palace, beautifully lit up in his honour. The spacious reception hall, was filled almost to suffocation with State officials, *Bhayats*, *Grasias*, and members of the aristocracy, who eagerly pressed forward to pay him their respects. Gifts were presented to him. Sanskrit and Gujarati verses, specially composed in his honour, were recited. The Chief *Karbhari* voiced the greetings of the people in a short address to which the Thakore Sahib replied in a neatly worded speech.

9

A few days later Bhagvat Singhjee celebrated his 23rd birthday and gladdened the hearts of his subjects by writing off all outstanding debts due to the State, amounting to Rs. 56,000.

Death demanded a heavy toll during this year. The Thakore Sahib's third son, Ajit Singh—an infant of five months—was suddenly taken ill and was soon past all medical aid. Five months later, on September 16, 1887, his second son, Ranjit Singh, then about two years of age, passed away. The shock was felt throughout the State.

Another death occurred in the family about this time. Bai Shree Naniba Sahiba, one of the widows of his elder brother Prithirajji, died. After her husband's death she had returned to her father's home in Wankaner. In September, 1889, she expressed the wish to the Thakore Sahib to make her home in Gondal. He readily consented. She was received, upon her arrival, with all the marks of respect due to her and suitable quarters were assigned to her in the Durbargarh. A *jivai* was conferred upon her—equal

in amount to the one enjoyed by Bai Shree Bonjiba Sahiba, another widow of Prithirajji. Unfortunately she died two months after her arrival in Gondal.

Heavy at heart, Bhagvat Sinhjee found consolation in redoubling his efforts to improve the administration. His accomplishment in extending communications and in ending the vagaries of the land-revenue system was noteworthy.

10

While thus engaged, an opportunity of which mention will be made in Chapter XIII, came his way, in 1890, to continue his interrupted medical studies. He rejoined the Edinburgh University and worked at his books and lectures and in the clinics and wards until he earned the right to append M.B.C.M. and M.R.C.P.E. to his name—the first time any Raja had obtained such distinction.

A writer, drawing upon first-hand information, related of him some four years later that he

"...was well known in the Edinburgh Medical School. He set at nought the difficulties that lay in the way of one of his religion going through a regular course of medical instruction. He devoted himself to his studies with a steadiness which could not be surpassed."

11

A little later he went to Oxford to receive the degree of Doctor of Civil Laws from the most ancient of British Universities. In proposing the award, *in honoris causa*, of that degree on Commemoration Day (June 22, 1892) Dr. Mail, of the New College, praised the high qualities possessed by the Thakore Sahib as "a father of his kingdom."

He highly valued this degree. Only a person who was present at a Commemoration Day Ceremony, he remarked in a speech that he made upon his return to Gondal, could "have some idea of the composition of that learned body." Any man would certainly be proud of being a member of such an august assembly."

His ambition was not yet satisfied. As opportunity permitted he spent as much time as he could spare from his administrative duties working at his thesis—"A Short History of Aryan Medical Science" (see Chapter XIV)—to submit to the University for his Doctorate in Medicine. The Faculty appreciated his diligent research and his scientific acumen and bestowed upon him in 1895, the degree of M.D. A few months later he was admitted as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. He was now at the top of the Medical ladder.

CHAPTER X

Railway Building

I

On the western coast of Kathiawar lies Porbandar. As its name implies, it is a port (*bandar*). Even at the time of which we are writing craft engaged in coastal traffic could come up the creek within a cable length or two of the town.

The advantages that the natural roadstead offered led, in 1785, to the selection of the site as the capital of that State, which until then had been at Chhaya. The Rana Sultanji, who made the transfer, was descended from the Jethvas—an ancient ruling race dominant in this part of the peninsula since the 9th or 10th century.

Just about the time Bhagvat Sinhjee was invested with ruling powers, a minority regime was ushered in Porbandar. Mr. F. S. P. (afterwards Sir Frederick) Lely, a Bombay Civilian, placed in charge of the affairs of that State, was a virile administrator, ambitious to make a record for himself.

One of the tasks he set before himself was to build a railway line in the State. That undertaking could prosper only if it had the blessing of the Thakore Sahib of Gondal, in whose territory was situated the nearest railhead—Dhoraji.

Mr. Lely had cause to know that Bhagvat Sinhjee was anxious to carry the railway to his own capital.

This knowledge did not, however, deter him from making an effort to win him over and to persuade the Government of Bombay to exert its influence in that direction.

To arouse the Thakore Sahib's enthusiasm, he begged him to consider how Gondal and Porbandar were naturally fitted, in many respects, to work together. Gondal was an inland State, he pointed out, dependent upon railway communication for the rapid transport of its agricultural surplus. The large and fertile cotton district on its western side entirely lacked such facilities.

Porbandar on the other hand, was washed on the south, by the Arabian Sea and had a good port, "capable of improvement." The harbour at the time could accommodate country craft of moderate size: but careful investigation was being made to extend and to improve it.

2

The Thakore Sahib knew that if he gave his blessing to Mr. Lely's proposal, the Gondal-Jetalsar scheme, upon which his own heart had for years been set, would inevitably be delayed. His refusal, on the other hand, would block, at least for the time being, the extension of railways in the peninsula upon which the British (and not only Porbandar) were keen. Statesmanship seemed to lie in self-abnegation and after much anxious consideration he entered into partnership with that State.

He might well have claimed Rs. 2,34,491 from the concern, that sum being the cost incurred upon the Bhadar bridge belonging to his State. But he refused to advance that claim, asking "merely in return that the bridge to be built near Upleta be so designed as to accommodate cart traffic also."

3

Lord Reay arrived at Dhoraji on December 28, 1887, to inaugurate the work. A distinguished gathering, headed by the Thakore Sahib, welcomed him on the station platform.

Mr. Ladha Damodar, the Chairman of the Municipality read out an address in which he proudly referred to Dhoraji as Bhagvat Sinhjee's birth-place and also as the largest town in the State. In the whole of Kathiawar it was, indeed, second only to Bhavnagar in respect of trade.

He told the Governor that of late years trade in Dhoraji had been depressed. The railway extension upon which the Thakore Sahib was spending so large a capital should revive it and make the people prosperous.

The head of the Municipality took the opportunity to thank the Ruler for the timely advance he had made to the local merchants to tide them over difficult times and the other marks of solicitude he had shown.

The Governor, in replying to the address echoed the hope that the railway would eventually increase the prosperity not only of Dhoraji but also of the entire State. He made several complimentary references to his host, who had recently returned from "his stay in England and Scotland." He could already discern advantages accruing from that visit.

He had been "glad to note from this address that the Thakore Sahib had, in this instance, shown his solicitude for his subjects by making advances to local traders."

4

On December 29th the large *shamiana* pitched for the performance of the principal ceremony was crowded

with persons of distinction when the Governor entered. In requesting him to turn the first sod, the Thakore Sahib delivered a speech in which he thus outlined his railway policy:

"Since I have had the direct management of my State, I have never doubted the wisdom of extending, as far as my resources permitted, the existing railway, and the only question which occupied me, was the direction which such extension should take most advantageously for my people and my State. The port of Bhavnagar was already secured for our trade by the Bhavnagar-Gondal line. The proposed line to Junagadh and Veraval from Jetalsar will bring the seaboard within easier reach of us. The great advantages of our connection with your trunk lines, required only to be extended to other parts of my territory and Your Excellency will easily understand my strong inclination in favour of Gondal, my capital, so that I might secure to it the many administrative and political advantages by connecting it with the existing line. Before I could form my decision, Mr. Lely, who is now devoting his best energies to the administration of the Porbandar State, put forward his proposal for a railway to Porbandar, and I was told he wanted my partnership. I did not wish that a project so fruitful of good to many in this province should fall through for want of my co-operation. I therefore deemed it my duty, however reluctantly to give up my cherished scheme of taking the railway to my capital and to give my best help in the proposed extension, which will connect the port of Porbandar with this city of Dhoraji—the second city in my State.

"The extended line will be about 69 miles in length, 30 of which will be in Gondal territory, 21½ in Navanagar territory and 17½ in Porbandar territory. The total cost of construction is estimated at about Rs.34,00,000, which will be borne by the Porbandar and Gondal States as joint-proprietors."

He also referred to the connection that had existed between the two States. "Our ancestors of Porbandar and Gondal," he said, "besides being bound by ties of relationship, were friends and comrades in arms; and it was their good fortune in many a tough encounter with their common enemies to be partners in the victories of war." He was therefore happy that the States were joining hands and starting "as comrades in the paths of peace, the victories of which, would be not less renowned than those of war." He could not say

"...whether our ancestors desired or received the good wishes of the Paramount Power for their enterprises in those days. We, my Lord, do desire your good wishes, and Your Excellency's presence here is proof that we have secured them. In asking Your Excellency to turn the first sod of this new line and join us in asking God's blessing on this enterprise, I congratulate myself that we have among us, on behalf of the Paramount Power, a Governor whose noble attributes ensure to it our devoted attachment."

Commenting on this speech the editorial observer of the *Advocate of India* wrote that this was, "the first instance on record of a native chief indulging in a humorous reflection in the course of an address to the British representative." In view of the fact "that the 'enterprises' of the old chiefs of Porbandar and Gondal, to which the Thakore Sahib alluded, must as often have been directed against the Paramount Power

of those days, as in favour of it, Lord Reay could not have failed to detect the quiet fun of the Thakore Sahib's parallels."

5

Immediately after Bhagvat Sinhjee had resumed his seat, Lord Reay delivered a lengthy and important speech. He praised the Thakore Sahib for doing "that which one dislikes." By foregoing his "natural inclination" to link his capital with the most advantageous railhead, he had shown his "just appreciation as a Ruler, by attending to State needs rather than following personal predilections."

A firm believer in the doctrine of free trade he expressed his satisfaction at finding that the proprietary States were refraining from imposing any "new duties or bounties" and from enhancing "any existing ones on traffic passing through any station." He took the view that "a great railway junction is the best exponent of the absurdity of transit duties."

The Governor was pleased that the undertaking was to be "carried out by native labour, largely under native supervision and ultimately the system would be worked by a large personnel of native servants under a very limited number of highly trained English engineers." He related how a station-master with whom he had been talking had informed him, evidently without regret, that he had failed in his matriculation examination. Perhaps, Lord Reay remarked, "as a station-master he is much happier than as a B.A., waiting for employment in the Revenue Department."

The railway workshops would, he said, serve as "a most valuable school for the development and training of skilled workmen." He looked upon the extension of railways as the best incentive to the development of technical education.

As an instance in point he stated that only the day before, when travelling in the sumptuous Bhavnagar saloon, he had been enabled to appreciate what could be done in this direction under the guidance of English skill. The carriage had been designed by Mr. Wylie, who deserved "to be complimented on having turned out in the Bhavnagar works such a perfect specimen with the aid of native workmen."

Though great energy in railway building has been shown in Kathiawar, he would not, he declared, be happy until the Kathiawar and Rajputana-Malwa systems had been linked. He was also anxious to "obtain unity of gauge."

Lord Reay praised the Thakore Sahib for acting up to the pledges he had given at the time of his investiture three years back. The British authorities had been so gratified with his ways that the Governor had been commanded by the Viceroy and Governor-General (Lord Dufferin) to announce that Her Majesty the Queen-Empress Victoria had been pleased to raise Gondal to the position of a First Class State and further that in future the Rulers of Gondal would be entitled to a salute of eleven guns.

The essential causes for the conferring of this unique honour upon Bhagvat Sinhjee were, to quote Lord Reay's words:

"...You have shown your just appreciation as a Ruler, by attending to State needs rather than personal gratification. When you, Thakore Sahib, assumed direct rule, you used these words: 'I need hardly say that it will be my earnest desire to see that justice and order prevail in my State, that life and property are well protected, that the *kunbi* enjoys the fruit of his labour, and the trader the profits of his trade; that roads are improved and communications facilitated;

that education is encouraged and provision is made for the relief of the sick poor."

"Thakore Sahib, though you have been only three years on your *gadi*, I believe you have acted up to the pledges you then gave."

The *shamiana* in which these speeches were delivered had been erected over the spot where work on the road-bed was to begin. In the centre was a plot of grass, carefully trimmed. At the conclusion of his address His Excellency walked up to it, cut the first sod with a silver spade and removed it in a handsome barrow. After *attar* and *pan supari* had been distributed, the proceedings terminated.

6

Had the line thus inaugurated followed an almost direct route, it would have had to cross the Barda Hills, extending for about 25 miles east and west and some 15 miles north and south. A little less than 60 miles in length, it would have passed through Upleta, Kutiyana and Ranawao.

A somewhat longer route, but less costly to build, had however been chosen. It left the direct line at Upleta, passed to the north of the Barda Hills and then, turning south, joined the other line at Ranawao, ten miles from Porbandar. Although this route involved an additional length of eight or nine miles, it was advantageous from other points of view.

(1) There was already the direct road from Dhoraji to Porbandar, metalled and bridged throughout the greater part of its length, so that the locality was already supplied with one good means of communication.

(2) Owing to its natural features, this district was liable to heavy floods which would constantly

endanger the safety of the line and in any event would involve a large expenditure upon bridging.

(3) The chief object of the railway was to serve as great an area of the Gondal State as possible. While on the direct route only about 14 miles of line and two stations would be within its limits, on the northern route there would be about 30 miles of line and five stations. It was therefore natural that the Thakore Sahib should insist upon the adoption of this route as an essential condition of his support.

The alignment originally proposed would have taken the line some distance from Upleta, with more than 4,000 inhabitants. The people made a strong representation.

An engineer who visited the place was taken to the top of a high building by the *patel*, who gazing with manifest pride upon the panorama spread out before them, said: "fancy such a town as this being left without a station!" His wish was fulfilled.

The residents of Bhayavadar had similarly to be assured that they would be served by the railway.

Supedi, famous for the beautiful temples dedicated to Murli Manohar and Revnath, Upleta, Khakhijalia, Bhayavadar, and Pandli, were the four important stations on the Gondal section.

At the thirteenth mile the line crossed the Vinnu river and entered Navanagar territory, which it traversed for 21 miles. The most important place in that section was Jamjodhpur.

The remaining 18 miles lay within Porbandar limits until it reached the capital of that State on the margin of the sea.

The construction of these 69 miles took two years. By December, 1889, it was ready for the formal opening.

The line unfortunately did not fulfil Bhagvat Sinhjee's expectations. In constructing it, for one thing, adequate openings had not been provided for the run-off of rain-water, particularly when the monsoon was heavy. This lack of foresight entailed considerable expenditure upon repairs not long after the work of construction had been completed; and ate up profits even in a year that otherwise would have proved prosperous. Its fortunes will be followed in another chapter.

7

Circumstances were meanwhile shaping themselves to promote the scheme the Thakore Sahib had so self-sacrificingly put aside to speed this project. Near Jetalsar was Navagadh, a village in Junagadh State. Mr. Haridas Viharidas, the energetic Dewan of that State, wished to construct an extension from that station to this village and approached the Thakore Sahib for permission.

His Highness immediately saw an opportunity for realizing his long-cherished ambition to put his capital on the railway map. If the line was to be extended as far as Navagadh, why should it not be carried to Gondal?

As the plan matured it grew in proportion. It was finally decided to carry the projected line from Jetalsar to Rajkot, through Gondal.

Through the good offices of Sir Charles Ollivant, at that time the Political Agent, an understanding was arrived at between the governments through whose territories the line would pass. Gondal and Junagadh agreed to pay each a six-anna* share, while Rajkot and Jetpur were to pay each a two-anna share of the cost of construction.

* The Indian way of saying three-eighths and one-eighth respectively.

For once the miracle of effecting a "considerable saving" on the estimate was performed. A record was also made in regard to the length of time required for construction.

Telegraphic sanction for building the line was received from the Government of India in February, 1892. Work was not started in real earnest until June of that year. But the entire line was ready to be opened for passenger traffic on April 12, 1893.

o

A grand festival was held in celebration of the event. Lord Harris, who had succeeded Lord Reay as the Governor of Bombay, came to perform the ceremony, though the weather was intensely hot and he ordinarily would have been sojourning at Mahableswar at the time. In addition to his staff, Lord Castlemain and the Political Agent accompanied him to Gondal on April 11th.

In asking the Governor to perform the opening ceremony, the Thakore Sahib hoped that the new railway would confer a real boon on the travelling public and would, in a great measure, stimulate inland trade and inland industries, which stood in urgent need of material encouragement. It doubtless would afford ample facilities to the Agency headquarters, which had now been connected with the ports of Porbandar, Veraval and Bhavnagar on the one hand and with the trunk line of the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway at Wadhwan on the other.

In the evening a banquet was given by the Thakore Sahib. After dinner His Excellency drove to the railway station and left by a special train for Porbandar.

Lord Harris summarized, in his address, the history of railway making in Kathiawar. He stated that at that time the total length and cost of several railways in Kathiawar were respectively:

B. B. & C. I. Railway, (5'-6"), 30 miles in length, cost not known;

B. G. J. P. (Bhavnagar, Gondal, Junagadh, Porbandar) Railway (5'-3 $\frac{3}{4}$ "), 334 miles in length, cost Rs.1,71,24,771;

Jetalsar-Rajkot (3'-3 $\frac{3}{8}$ "), 46 miles in length, cost Rs.20,55,599;

Total, 504 miles, cost, Rs.2,08,80,370

He highly commended the Thakore Sahib and his colleagues for their enterprise in taking up this work and added "a very sincere aspiration that it may be a source of profit" to them and of benefit to those people whose lands were tapped by the railway. He then proceeded:

"I should think that every one who hears of the amount invested by Gondal in railways will agree that your claim that the State has done its fair share of work is perfectly just, and will earnestly hope that Your Highness, the other Chiefs and shareholders of Kathiawar who have invested their money in this way, will be repaid by a fair share of interest they may secure from the earnings of the railway."

Reckoning the expenditure incurred on railway construction during His Highness' minority, Rs.53,00,000 had been thus invested up to the end of the fiscal year 1892-93. He doubted that the lines would yield him an adequate financial return; but he knew that they would open up certain portions of Kathiawar and would thereby promote general prosperity.

The Public Works Department whole-heartedly co-operated with the engineers entrusted with building

the railways to ensure that the new lines would be a success. It expeditiously constructed roads, with the necessary bridges and culverts, to connect the station at Jetalsar with Jetalsar village and also the Agency Civil Station, to locate which the Thakore Sahib cheerfully provided the requisite land.



CHAPTER XI

Sunshine and shadow

1

The official announcement of the elevation of Gondal to be a "First Class State" reached the capital on January first of the following year. Not only was the Thakore Sahib's prestige enhanced but his criminal jurisdiction was extended to comprehend all persons of non-European origin instead of merely his own subjects, as had been the case. That news gave universal joy. The fact that the honours were to be hereditary added to the happiness of the people.

A Durbar, described by the *Advocate of India* as "unusually large, was held on that day to celebrate the event. Another newspaper correspondent wrote of it as "a grand Durbar, the like of which had never taken place within the recollection of the oldest inhabitant."

The Thakore Sahib, accompanied by his Chief Karbhari, entered the Durbar Hall, "full to overflowing," at seven o'clock in the evening. In congratulating him on behalf of his "*Bhayats, Grasis, Jivailars, officers, servants and ryots,*" Mr. Bezouji recalled that 1886 had been a memorable year "in the annals of Gondal." His Highness' residence in Scotland for a long time to quench his thirst for knowledge, his safe return home,

"the acquisition of the high degree of LL. D., chiefly reserved for men distinguished in the republic of letters, the bestowal of the order of K. C. I. E. by Her Majesty's own hands, the inauguration of the great public undertaking like the Dhoraji-Porbandar Railway, and, last but not least, the recognition of Gondal as a first class State in Kathiawar—these and other events deserved to be written in letters of gold." They were "most agreeably surprised to notice that all these events should happen in the course of one short year," which would "henceforth be remembered as the year of jubilation in Gondal." The Chief Karbhari continued:

"Improve the place you sit upon is an old precept, and Your Highness has followed it up in your own case, for you have enhanced the honour and glory of your *gadi* to the extreme gratification of your people. The *gadi* was first planted by your brave ancestor Kumbhoji I., it grew into an extensive tree in the time of the most enterprising warrior-chief Kumbhoji II.; and in your own time it began to fructify for the benefit of thousands living under its benign shade. We sincerely pray to the Almighty Sovereign of the whole universe that by His grace your subjects may long enjoy the fruits of your good government, may you satisfy their wants, may the glory of your kingdom never fade, and may you live long to rule your subjects well."

2

The Ruler's modesty made him reply that "if any one be entitled to congratulations, it is the State and not I." He was grateful for the compliments paid to him but declared that he did not deserve them." ² He was convinced that

"It is the duty of a ruler to make his people happy, to redress their grievances, to increase their national greatness, and to develop the resources of the country. If the slightest effort is made in this direction it is nothing more than the fulfilment of an obligation. ...

"I do not like the policy of increasing the State revenue by oppressive measures. I would rather sacrifice a part of the income if by so doing the people become happy and prosperous. This I try to do on every suitable occasion."

The Thakore Sahib then asked Mr. Bezouji whom he commended for his "alacrity, probity and working habits, and for the activity he had displayed in the administration of the State during his absence in Europe, to announce certain concessions" he was making to his subjects, particularly to benefit the poor people:

(1) House-tax and water-tax were abolished in all *Khalea* villages wholly owned by the Durbar and also in such other villages as paid taxes of these descriptions exclusively.

(2) The right of ownership was granted in respect of all houses, shops, *vadas* etc., in all villages, both to the present holders from whom house-tax was levied and also to those who were exempt from that tax, such as Brahmins, Rajputs and other warrior classes, *Bavas* and similar religious classes.

(3) The right of ownership was similarly granted to all persons in the towns of Gondal, Dhoraji and Upleta who did not already possess it.

(4) Fees were reduced on all mortgages and sale deeds of property released by the State. Properties thus released were thereafter to be alienable by mortgage, sale, gift, will, or otherwise and liable to the processes of the civil court for the execution of decrees.

(5) All encroachments and unauthorized occupation of lands, houses, *wadras* etc. by cultivators were not to be disturbed if they were of more than twenty years' standing.

(6) The levy of *mandvi* dues from cultivators in occupation of *Jivaidar's gher-khakh* lands were abolished.

(7) All servants of the State in every department were granted one month's pay as a bonus. This benefit was extended to even the employees of the Educational Department, though that Department, at that time, was under the control of the Bombay provincial Government, and not that of the State.

3

Bhagvat Sindhjee had asked Lord Reay, a short time earlier, to lay the foundation-stone of a girls' school at Dhoraji, to be named after Lady Reay, who took "an exceedingly warm interest in the cause of female education." In inviting His Excellency to perform the ceremony he had declined to dwell upon the advantages of education for women, since he thought "that on our onward march we have passed the stage of apathy and mistrust with which our girls' schools were once looked upon by the conservative section of our people." The times had changed and every one recognized the blessings of female education." (*The Times of India*, Bombay)

This was a rosate view of the situation. He was to find, in later years, a crass apathy towards education—especially female education—and was to be constrained to use compulsion to accelerate literacy among girls.

It was however a matter of gratification to him that there were in his State four such girls' schools. The one at Gondal was "by far the most flourishing under the careful superintendence of an experienced

Head-Mistress." He also "took it to be a hopeful sign that the present accommodation in the Dhoraji girls' school had been found insufficient for the increasing number of its pupils" and hence the necessity of a new building, which he trusted, would answer all requirements.

The building had been designed by the State Engineer, Ganesh Govind, who had recently been honoured by the Queen-Empress with the conferment of the title of Rao Bahadur. It was meant to accommodate 200 girls.

Referring to the work for placing medical relief within the reach of Indian women inaugurated by the Lady Dufferin, which the Bombay Branch of the National Indian Association was carrying on under Lady Reay's guidance, he remarked that educationally Indian women were backward and that fact impeded progress. He continued:

"Every step that raises them in general education is, in my opinion, calculated to give increased facilities for their special training as nurses and women doctors. Looked at from this standpoint our school may be regarded as an institution in which the groundwork of a general education will be laid preparatory to the special course of studies, upon which some at least of the scholars may be expected to enter."

4

In replying to this address, Lord Reay referred to his host as "an acknowledged authority in medical matters." He hoped that the school of which he was laying the foundation-stone would serve as "an important feeder to the Female Training College at Rajkot."

His Excellency had noticed the unequal rate at which education was spreading between the various sections of the community. To quote him:

"The other day at Lunavada my attention was forcibly called to the curious coincidence that in one of the Mahomedan boys' schools there were 81 pupils and the same number of girls in the girls' school. But the parallel ceased there, for the percentage of Hindu girls who passed was considerably larger than the percentage of Mussalman boys who passed in the Urdu schools. I urge the Mahomedans of Dhoraji to gird their loins. There is an appreciable amount of danger that we shall find Hindu girls outstripping Mahomedan boys in the educational race. The danger of Hindu girls surpassing Mahomedan girls is even more formidable. I know that it is Your Highness' wish to keep the balance even."

Lord Reay called prominent attention to a device employed by the Thakore Sahib to bridge the gulf created through the education of Hindu and Muslim boys in separate schools. The "common playground" he had provided for the students of the Gujarati (Hindu) and Urdu (Muslim) schools not only enabled him to economize space but also tended to promote unity. "The common playground is the emblem of the common struggle in after life for both sections."

The Governor warned the Muslims that they would "have only themselves to blame if they lost the golden opportunities now offered them" of having their girls educated. He deplored the fact that girls left school at an early age and exhorted the Thakore Sahib not to spare any effort "to retain girls in higher forms till they reach a riper age than was generally the rule."

Lord Reay had noticed that His Highness was setting the school in a garden and expressed the hope that the girls attending it would acquire some knowledge of botany. The lessons taught by Nature, he emphasized, were invaluable and incalculable harm accrued to past generations through neglect.

He counselled the Thakore Sahib also to "make some provision for giving them instruction in the rudiments of hygiene. No one, he said, was more capable than he of appreciating such need.

5

A few months later, on July 31, 1888, Bhagvat Singhjee stated that he regarded education as "an indispensable factor in the elevation of a nation." Technical education was, in his opinion, "the backbone of national prosperity." (*The Poona Observer and Civil and Military Journal*)

These statements were made in the course of a speech he delivered in reply to an address presented to him by the members of the Managing Board of the Poona Native Institution, in which "secondary education in English, Latin, Persian, Sanskrit and Marathi was imparted. Drawing and carpentry classes were also conducted and special effort made to interest the students in natural science. There were upwards of 700 pupils in the school. Many of them boys of the humbler classes.

6

The Thakore Sahib was anxious to make a breach in the *purdah* system and little by little Shree Nandkunverba—the Dharampur Rani as she was called—was persuaded to take part in functions aiming at the upliftment of her sex. The first gathering of that kind she attended was at Rajkot in December, 1888.

In the course of the presidential address she delivered at the distribution of prizes at the Female Training College (to which Lord Reay had referred in his speech at Dhoraji) she expressed the view that education was a more valuable and beautiful possession than "jewels and rich clothing." (*Times of India*, Bombay.)

She urged the students to "make good use of whatever opportunities" were vouchsafed them for acquiring knowledge. "Men and women may be variously mismatched—some in age, some in disposition; but those who are mismatched in education are the worst-mated of all."

She held before them the old Aryan ideal of the educated mother. She asked them to remember, "where the mother is educated, there the children are better trained."

In the following August, while distributing prizes at the Girls' School in Gondal, she painted a picture of the past to stir the imagination of the students. "Many very learned ladies flourished in our country in ancient times," she told them. The present and the future generations of women would do well to keep in mind the examples of illustrious ladies like Maitreyee, Gargee and Leela.

It was hardly necessary to dwell on the erudition of Maitreyee and Gargee. "Their words of wisdom were read with reverence by great pandits."

Leela was so accomplished that she was "believed by the people to be an incarnation of Sarasvati—the goddess of learning" and was chosen as umpire "in the great philosophical controversy between Mandan Mishra," her own husband, "and Shankaracharya—the most distinguished scholars of their age." So just and fair-minded was she that her husband's rival readily consented to her appointment.

Nor were these three the only distinguished women of olden times. There were others as great or nearly as great. It was probably difficult for modern maidens to reach the "high standard of proficiency" of these heroines. It was however incumbent upon the mothers of to-morrow to know at least "as much of reading, writing, singing, cooking, keeping accounts, sewing, knitting and other domestic work" as was necessary for their worldly requirements.

She wished them to bear in mind that virtue is "equally essential—perhaps more so." To her mind it was better to be moral "without learning than to become learned and be addicted to vice."

The highest ideal, however was a combination of learning and virtue. As the old adage had it: "where learning and virtue are found together, it is as gold with fragrance."

On a similar occasion, a few months later, she harked back to the same topic. A variety of qualities had rendered many members of her sex famous in ancient times. Some were celebrated for their scholarship; some for their purity of conduct; some for courage, fortitude, or enterprise; some again for modesty or presence of mind; some were renowned for devotion to their husbands; some had been remarkable for their piety; and some for their excellence in household management.

It was essential, she thought, for little girls to learn about the lives and character of such illustrious women. Books treating of such subjects, if carefully taught, would, in her opinion, be better for them than those intended for boys.

A lady of strong practical sense, she took the opportunity presented by the prize distribution at the girls' school in Gondal in February, 1890, to impress upon the pupils the need of utilizing in every day

life the knowledge acquired at that institution in these words:

"What is learnt in the school...will be found useful in domestic life long after the school is left. How to win the husband's heart, how to be always agreeable to his wishes, how to pay respect to the father-in-law and mother-in-law, as well as to the father and mother, how to behave towards your juniors and elders and equals, how to keep the house clean, how to acquire proficiency in cookery, how to spend your leisure in reading, sewing and needle-work, these and other matters will call into requisition the knowledge you have picked up in the schools.

"If by God's grace you may be blessed with children, your education will then stand you in good stead in solving the questions how best to rear them and how to amuse them by good moral stories. Possibly you do not get the opportunity to learn all these things here; still lessons on some of these subjects are no doubt being given you occasionally; and they must prove very useful." (*The Times of India*, Bombay.)

She did not however believe in permitting subjects of practical utility to supplant those of cultural value. *Garba* (singing and dancing) appealed to her particularly. To sing well, she said, was a great accomplishment and girls should pay attention to becoming proficient in that art.

7

The Thakore Sahib was unhappy that this progressive lady did not keep good health. Some months prior to delivering the speech quoted above she had suddenly fallen ill. The doctors in attendance took a serious view of her ailment; but to everybody's relief

she soon recovered. So happy was His Highness that he ordered candied sugar to be distributed to all the school children throughout the State.

The improvement however proved to be only temporary. The physicians consulted were finally forced to the conclusion that it was necessary for her to go to England for treatment.

Custom stood in the way of the acceptance of this advice. For centuries ladies of the Rajput ruling dynasties had refused to appear unveiled before men outside the immediate family circle. When travel could not be avoided they were carried in a closely curtained *palkhi* (palanquin) or driven in a covered carriage.

It had cost the Rani-mother and the other women members of the Thakore Sahib's household many a pang to consent to his departure for Europe six years earlier. The very idea of a Rajput lady going on a voyage across the "black water" was repugnant to them.

The Rani Sahiba was however progressive by nature. The stress of necessity finally brought her liberal tendencies to a focus and she promised her husband that she would accompany him to Europe to consult specialists.

Her condition made it imperative to expedite the arrangements for leaving Gondal. Accommodation was secured on the *S. S. Sutlej*, appointed to sail from Bombay on March 21, 1890.

8

On the eve of departure the Thakore Sahib received a farewell address from the people. It breathed sentiments of loyalty and devotion and expressed the hope that the Rani Sahiba would rapidly recover from her illness under the treatment of the English physicians.

His Highness' reply to this address threw a strong light upon the ideals he cherished regarding the relations that should exist between the Ruler and the ruled. "As a human family consists of five, ten, or twenty members," he said, "so a Raj or a kingdom is a great family consisting of the vast multitude of its members with the Raja as its *pater familias*." "As the happiness or misery of a family depends upon the happiness or misery of each individual member," he continued, "so the happiness or misery of a Raja and his subjects is interdependent upon each other."

He was trying to discover ways and means to make his people happy and prosperous, to diminish the burden of taxation, to increase commerce and afford new facilities for communication and particularly to improve the condition of the peasantry. He feared he had not been able to carry out to the fullest extent all the projects he had conceived for their welfare. They would agree with him however that "great changes, if adopted hurriedly, result in disastrous consequences."

Thus saying, he left his State and people in the care of his trusted Chief Karbhari and departed with his ailing consort. Their three children accompanied them.

Of the eldest—the Rajkumar Shree Bhojrajjee—mention has been made in an earlier chapter. The Rajkumari Shree Bakunverba had been born a year later. These two children had been educated according to reformed ideas as befitted their age and rank and trained in habits of regularity and neatness. Particular care was taken to develop their bodies. They were made to go out for a ride or walk in the open air every morning and evening.

The Thakore Sahib's second surviving son, the Kumar Shree Bhupat Sinhjee, was only about two years old at the time of their departure.

The voyage was uneventful. Fortunately the Rani Sahiba's condition did not become worse on the way.

9

Even before disembarking the Thakore Sahib had made up his mind to proceed with all speed to Edinburgh. He felt confident that Scottish physicians would be able to restore her to health. —

His faith in the skill of the Edinburgh doctors was soon justified. Under their treatment Her Highness began almost immediately to make progress. In a few weeks there was every warrant for expecting a complete recovery if the course prescribed was pursued sufficiently long.

The Thakore Sahib was naturally loath to leave his Consort behind and return to Gondal. Nor did he have the slightest cause to entertain any anxiety in regard to the affairs of his State. The times were propitious and the arrangements he had made for carrying on the administration during his absence were working smoothly.

He decided to place the two elder children in Scottish schools and to resume his medical studies at the university. By the time Her Highness was in a condition to leave, Edinburgh he had successfully passed his examination for the Bachelor's Degree in medicine and surgery and also for Membership of the Royal College of Physicians as stated in the chapter entitled "Medical Studies." About this time the Queen-Empress honoured the Rani Sahiba by conferring upon her, personally, the Insignia of the Order of the Crown of India—an Order instituted for the exclusive benefit of ladies of the Indian Empire.

10

When the time came to wish goodbye to Britain His Highness decided to return to India by way of

North America and the Far East. A tour round the world would provide Her Highness, who was then convalescent, with an opportunity to have further rest and change. It would, at the same time, enable them both to visit the New World, where, they had been told, a new civilization was arising. The accounts of the progress that Japan was then making had also piqued their curiosity. They were anxious also to see something of the British Colonies in Australia and Ceylon. The latter island was reputed to be the place to which Sita—the Rani Sahiba's ideal woman—had been carried by the wicked Ravana and where she had been kept by him in captivity for twelve years.

They decided to leave in Scotland Bhojrajjee and Bakunverba, who were getting on well at their respective schools. Both the children had made many friends and, after a time, would not miss them much. Despite such assurances, Shree Nandkunverba was reluctant to consent to the arrangement. Never before had a Rajput mother been put to the ordeal of leaving her sons and daughters in British schools.

When the plans for the tour had been matured news came of a shipwreck: but she did not become nervous and ask that the arrangements be changed.

It is not possible nor necessary to follow them in their peregrinations round the globe. The impressions formed by Her Highness of the people with whom she came in contact will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

On arrival in Gondal early in February, Their Highnesses found the town illuminated. Triumphal arches bore appropriate inscriptions. The streets were thronged with spectators eager to catch a glimpse of them. As His Highness, escorted by his chief officers and his Body-guard, passed he was greeted with prolonged shouts of "Jai! Jai! (Victory! Victory!) by

his subjects. At the entrance gate the procession halted while the people presented him with an address of welcome. He replied in a speech as much imbued with affection as their address had been. He assured them that the revival of trade in the State was his chief anxiety at the moment. Thinking that the railway was "one of the potent means of encouraging trade," he had tried his best "to provide railway convenience...even though at the expense of some other public works."

At the close of this short speech the procession proceeded to the Durbar Hall, in which had assembled representative men of all classes and a few European ladies and gentlemen. The Chief Karbhari voicing the gratification of everybody in the State at Their Highnesses' safe return, congratulated them on the success of their trip to Europe—the Rani Sahiba's recovery—the degrees he had earned—and the honours that had been conferred upon them.

It was "not so difficult to be rich and popular in this world," Mr. Bezorji declared, "as to be honoured by a body of distinguished men and to be a member of them." The power of intelligence, he said, "was even greater than the power of a King; and that was why some of the greatest potentates used to dote upon the intellect of learned men." He had heard from Hindu friends that Indra, the Ruler of the Gods, folded his hands before Brihaspati, as the learning of the latter was said to be boundless; and Akbar had "adored the genius of Birbal."

Going into the details of Their Highnesses' successes during their absence, Mr. Bezorji stated:

"The learned members of the Edinburgh University have recognized you as one of them by conferring on Your Highness the eminent degree of LL. D. Similarly, the famous University

of Oxford has admitted you into its portals by granting you the highest academic gift in its power. Your people have every reason to be proud of this...Honourable fame is the worldly goal of men. To live without making a name or without the approbation of one's fellow-men is to live in vain. Following this precept Your Highness may be said to have earned your laurels already."

(Bombay Gazette)

The Thakore Sahib returned the compliment by eulogizing the services rendered by the Chief Karbhari during his absence. Though the absence had been longer than he had intended, his

"...mind was at ease as regards the conduct of affairs on this side. For I was perfectly confident that he whom I entrusted with the reins of my Government would drive the State coach in conformity with my own designs. And I am glad to say that my confidence was well placed. Mr. Bezonji, I feel great pleasure in assuring you publicly that I am perfectly satisfied with the way in which you have carried on the administration during my absence."

Even though compelled to be away for the second time after coming into power, for a comparatively long period, His Highness would not permit his Ministers merely to mark time. He had particularly insisted upon making improvements in departments that vitally affected the well-being of his people; and at his insistence schemes had been matured which, when applied shortly afterwards, promoted happiness and prosperity in Gondal. In executing these policies with energy and loyalty Mr. Bezonji had indeed earned the Ruler's gratitude.

Referring to the improved state of the Rani Sahiba's health, His Highness told the assemblage that he had

"...been from an early age a great admirer of the English (Western) Medical Science. That admiration is now very much confirmed. I verily believe that the Rani Sahiba's recovery is one of the greatest triumphs of English medicine."

11

On February 14th a few days after this *Darbar*, Her Highness gave birth to a daughter. Named Leilaba, she belied the fears entertained concerning her constitution. Robust of body and cheerful in disposition, she was a visible proof of the soundness of the Rani Sahiba's recovery.

Shree Nandkunverba would no doubt have liked to rest quietly in Gondal: but a command from the Queen-Empress to attend the formal opening of the Imperial Institute in London, left no choice but to proceed almost immediately to England. As soon as she was able to travel Their Highnesses set their faces westward once more.

The India Office, on behalf of the Queen-Empress, had engaged for them a suite of rooms in the Grosvenor Hotel adjoining the large, new station named after Her Majesty. Sentries kept guard day and night outside the hotel during the stay of the Royal Guests.

Three other Indian rulers—the Maharaja of Bhavnagar (the Thakore Sahib's brother-in-law), the Thakore Sahib of Morvi and the Raja (now the Maharaja) of Kapurthala—had also been invited and were lodged at different hotels.

On May 10th the Queen proceeded to South Kensington in a grand procession. Immediately behind her carriage was an escort of Indian soldiers of the 18th Bengal Cavalry, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Richardson. Every man among them was specially picked for the

occasion. They all wore numerous medals, won by valiant service, in many campaigns.

The scene inside the spacious hall, at one end of which a dais had been erected, was animated. The Rani Sahiba and the Princess Bakunverba occupied chairs next to Lord Salisbury. The slender child clad in a *sari* sitting next to the statesman possessing a giant's stature, caused all eyes to be turned in their direction.

A new march, specially composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan, was first rendered. After a short colloquy with his august Mother, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (later the King-Emperor Edward VII.) declared that the building was "open and inaugurated." In token thereof he pressed a gold key heavily encrusted with precious stones, presented by India and the Colonies, into a slot in a pedestal. Instantly the electric circuit was closed, the signal tinkled and the musical bells in the tower pealed changes. After the Archbishop of Canterbury had offered prayer and pronounced the benediction, the Queen rose from her chair, stepped down from the dais and, on her way out, stopped for a moment to chat with the Rani Sahiba. His Highness, about this time, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

12

During their absence from Gondal the Public Works Department had installed a dynamo and wired the "Huzur Bungalow;" and at last Bhagvat Sinhjee was able to have electric light in his residence.

Shortly after returning to India he, as the delegate of the Royal College of Physicians (Edinburgh), attended the Indian Medical Congress held in Calcutta. Her Highness accompanied him on his trip to the then capital of India, and attracted considerable attention.

A third son (Kirit Sinhjee) was born to her on February 13th 1894 and it was thought that she would find a sea-voyage beneficial after the physical strain of that event. She, therefore, accompanied him when he visited Budapest. The Organizing Committee of the Eighth Annual Congress of Hygiene and Demography held in that city in July of that year had elected the Thakore Sahib Honorary President of one of the sections. After that Congress had finished its sittings Their Highnesses went to Britain to see their children.

They then proceeded to Moscow and attended the Coronation of the Czar Nicholas II., Emperor of all the Russias. The grandeur and solemnity of the ceremony appeared to him to be more Oriental than Occidental.

13

On His Highness' return home he took action to restrain the use of opium, into which a searching investigation was just being concluded by a Commission. Opium-eaters were bidden to rid themselves of the habit within six months on pain of being deprived of promotion in the service. Addicts were at the same time debarred from being taken into Government employment in future.

This action was expected to have "a salutary effect all round," as the habit was largely confined to the lowest social stratum, and rendered the persons who indulged in it unfit for active work.

On November 2, 1895, His Highness—and all Gondalis with him—suffered a great bereavement in the death of his revered mother, Bai Shree Monghiba Sahiba. Her vast store of knowledge and her experience had made her a tower of strength to Bhagvat Sinhjee, who asked her advice in all matters before coming to a decision in regard to policy. A lady of

great tact and benevolence and devoted to religious duties, her demise came as a terrible shock to everybody.

About this time the Thakore Sahib had a communication from his old tutor, Dr. Selby, then the Principal of the Deccan College, Poona, on behalf of the Deccan Education Society of which he had been elected President. That Society was collecting funds to establish a college to be named after Sir James Fergusson, which would place university education within easy reach of ambitious but poor students. Young men with brilliant academic records had volunteered to serve as professors on salaries barely sufficient for the necessities of life.

In contributing Rs. 20,000 to be ear-marked for building the "Bhagvat Sinhjee Quarters," the Thakore Sahib wrote eulogizing the noble efforts of the Society in diffusing knowledge. Since the money he was giving was not his own but his people's, he stipulated that the College should provide free instruction to ten *bona fide* Gondalis desirous of prosecuting university studies.

Not a single High School then existed in the State, the educational affairs of which were being controlled from Rajkot. The making of this stipulation was therefore in the nature of taking time by the forelock.

In laying the foundation-stone of the institution early in 1895, Lord Sandhurst commended the gift. Soon afterwards a fund was started, largely through the initiative of Professor Gopal Krishna Gokhale, for commissioning Mr. Brooks, who was then settled in Rajkot, to paint a portrait of the Thakore Sahib to be hung in the College Hall. Indians eminent in the learned professions and politics sent subscriptions to which the managing board made a substantial contribution.

As Gokhale stated in an eloquent speech on March 9th, 1896, the likeness was described as perfect

by those who had seen His Highness. It represented him in the robes of a Doctor of Civil Law of Oxford University.

Dr. Selby reminded the people assembled, especially the students, that the Thakore Sahib had "stepped out of his way to show such munificence," for his own people—and not the Fergusson College—"had the first claim upon his benefaction." Referring to His Highness' student days at the Rajkumar College, he remarked:

"...upon his love of work for the sake of fitting himself for his position in life. He had not, like most students to work to keep himself from want."

He asked the senior students to emulate the example set by the Thakore Sahib. He could not think of a better example for them to follow.

His Highness had not left his studies behind him. He was a student still. He went to Britain for medical education, and while there the Oxford University had conferred upon him the degree of D.C.L.

A fourth son (Nutver Singhjee) was born to the Rani Sahiba on May 29th, 1895, and a daughter (Taraba) on March 4th, 1900.

CHAPTER XII

Indian Medical Genius

1

Bhavgat Sinhjee might well have brought from Scotland not only medical knowledge but also contempt for the science of healing as it had been developed in the land of his birth. At the time he studied at the Edinburgh University Europeans and Americans knew little respecting the researches made by the ancient Indians into the conditions requisite for the maintenance of health and the methods and remedies employed for curing physical and mental maladies. They naturally assumed that in the domain of medicine, India had not advanced beyond the empirical stage.

Most of the Indians who proceeded to Europe for the study of western medicine were young and unacquainted with India's past. They returned to their country filled with prejudices and to take delight in belittling their ancestors' medical accomplishments.

2

Not so Bhagvat Sinhjee. Sojourn in Scotland and travel on the Continent of Europe, in North America and the extreme East, deepened his love for India—made him all the more eager to learn what his people had achieved in ages gone by—what original

contributions they had made to the world's store of knowledge. —

As the result of research he came to the conclusion that both medicine and surgery had been developed to a high standard in India in ancient times and that the discoveries made by our remote fore-fathers had been borrowed (often without acknowledgement) by other nations. As he stated in a work that he issued in 1895:

"...the literature of Aryan medicine is vast... and contains a mine of information not to be altogether despised by the students of medicine of our days. Should it be approached in a spirit of of fairness and inquiry, possibly it might disclose the germs of not a few of the marvellous discoveries in the realm of medicine of which the present century is justly proud."

"The English came with a pre-conceived notion that the Indian medicine was quackery, and the Hindu works on the subject a repository of sheer nonsense. They established medical schools and colleges—an inestimable boon, no doubt—but looked upon the healing art of the land with supreme contempt."

3

The publication of the book containing such statements created a stir. Apart from the fact that a Raja had brought it out the controversial character of its contents roused a storm in the medical world of Britain and India. He had expected as much, for he concluded the volume with the appeal:

"Let the Western and the Eastern Schools of Medicine join hands and reconcile themselves to each other whenever possible. Let them meet as friends, and not as foes or rivals... The East

has much to learn from the West, but the West, too, may have something to acquire from the East, if it so chooses. If the medical science in India, in its palmy days, has directly or indirectly assisted the early growth of the Medical Science of Europe, it is but fair that the latter should show its gratitude by rendering all possible help to the former, old as it is, and almost dying for want of nourishment. The Indian Medicine deserves preservation and investigation. It is the business of all seekers after truth—be they Europeans or Hindus—to take up the question in the spirit of fairness and sympathy. The revival of such a spirit will, it is hoped, lead at no distant date to a juster appreciation of Aryan Medical Science.

An editorial appeared in the *British Medical Journal* the leading medical organ in Britain:

"To the Hindus we owe a debt which we can at any rate acknowledge; and even in medicine many of our traditions and practices may be traced to them, as may be gathered from that most interesting *History of Aryan Medical Science* by the Thakore Sahib of Gondal."

The writer took care, nevertheless, to qualify his praise. "As an exposition" the book was "excellent... concise, correct, clear and well balanced;" but

"...the whole superstructure of Hindu medicine rests on a foundation of fiction and every doctrine and practice was thereby vitiated... It would be very easy from this book to select on the one hand examples of laborious and shrewd research and on the other illustrations of wild and absurd conjecture."

The *Indian Medical Gazette* pursued a similar policy. Bhagvat Sinhjee was congratulated on having

supplied a carefully written and instructive *Short History of Aryan Medical Science* which would form a valuable and useful addition to any medical man's library.

The lay-press in Britain, taken almost as a whole, treated the work very fairly. In the course of a lengthy review the *Times* (London), for example, stated that India "must have marched both fast and far during late years to produce a feudatory Ruler who could write such a book." It called special attention to his "genius for classification" and finished on this note:

"His Highness has already made European science a living fact throughout his territories, and his present book is not less creditable to him as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (Edinburgh) than are the Hospitals which he has established throughout his State honourable to him as a Ruler."

The reviewer of the *Standard* (London) also dealt kindly with the Thakore Sahib's effort to reconcile the two systems of medicine. While "European physicians saturated with the exact knowledge revealed by the microscope and still more modern instruments of precision, can hardly be expected not to smile at a system admittedly rooted in mythology," he wrote,

"...nevertheless they will find in the very earliest Indian dissertations qualities calculated to inspire respect for the intellectual acumen of those who composed them. From the first they show two of the essential attributes of real science as we understand it—the faculty of observation and the habit of systematic classification... From the evidence adduced it is clear that in many respects Aryan Medical Science was far more advanced a couple of thousand years ago than our own in the last century, and, bearing

in mind the examples given above, he must be a rash man who would assert that the ancient wisdom of Eastern sages may not yet be vindicated in many other particulars by future revelations of exact science."

In the course of a short review the *Scotsman* (Edinburgh) commented:

"Possibly its value is more literary and historical than medical and scientific though it is by no means certain that our Doctors have nothing to learn from the Indian *Materia Medica*, or may not be able to obtain a suggestion here and there from the ancient wisdom of the Hindus, embedded as it is in myth and superstitions and in what, to the Western mind, seems sheer nonsense and rubbish."

The *Englishman* (Calcutta) spoke very highly of the work without in any way qualifying its praise. It stated:

"The book is not a mere curiosity, but if it is approached in a right spirit of fairness and inquiry, it will probably disclose the germs of not a few of the marvellous discoveries in the realm of medicine of which the nineteenth century is so justly proud."

The Indian press, almost without exception, welcomed the book. Papers in Kathiawar, Gujarat, Madras and Bengal, wrote in glowing terms of Bhagvat Sinhjee's achievement.

The *Kathiawar Times* thought that:

"His Highness the Thakore Sahib does a two-fold service by presenting his work to the public inasmuch as it invites a public research into the dingy recesses of Indian antiquity and tells our graduates whose smattering of law and medicine teach them to cast to the winds the

teaching of the ancient sages and who flatter themselves that they are imbibing it from a pure and fresh fountain-head, forgetting all the while that it is nothing more than a second-hand edition in a crude and incomplete form of what their ancestors learnt and taught the world outside."

The *Hindu* (Madras), the *Mahratta* (Poona), the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta)—in fact almost every Indian paper of any importance—contained glowing reviews of the volume. It would, they hoped, usher in an era of better understanding between India and the West.



CHAPTER XIII

End of Serfdom

1

On one occasion the Nawab Bahadur Khan of Junagadh and the Thakore Sahib Bha Kumbhoji of Gondal, were chatting. They were the products of their time—of the days when knights were bold and rode about at the head of their followers adding to the area of their dominions, defending what they held with their life-blood.

The Nawab had very definite ideas as to what constituted wealth. It consisted, in his opinion, of precious metals and gems dug out of the bowels of the earth.

The Thakore Sahib acknowledged that he possessed no mines: but he claimed to have trees that yielded gold.

His fellow-ruler was unconvinced and wished to be shown one of these wonderful trees.

Just then a knot of Gondal peasants, their tall, stalwart forms clad in coarse homespun, came into sight. Pointing to them the Thakore Sahib exclaimed:

"There are a few of my gold-yielding trees."

2

Bhagvat Sinhjee values the farmers of his State no less than did his great ancestor. Ever since he

came into power he has been strongly opposed to permitting even an ounce of the golden sap to be drained from the "gold-yielding trees."

In 1887 he organized a special establishment for putting land revenue upon a basis that would be fair both to the cultivators and the State. He placed at its head Mr. Krishnashankar Lalshankar Dave, of whom mention was made in Chapter VIII.

Mr. Krishnashankar was instructed to devise a system that would do away with the vagaries of *bhagbatai* and yet retain as much of its elasticity as possible. He thought that *vighati* (the cash assessment tenure) as worked out in the *zillah* (British Indian districts) was considered much too rigid to suit Gondal conditions particularly because it did not make sufficient allowance for the losses suffered by the cultivator through no fault of his own.

His Highness preferred to lay down a standard rate with the proviso that in normal times the demand must not exceed that amount, no matter how heavy the crops or how high the prices realized for them; but, on the other hand, he decided that it must be scaled down in the degree that the out-turn fell below the average. In this manner the State would share any losses suffered by the occupants and would not let the poor fellows bear the entire burden of the misfortune.

As the system was finally worked out, the Settlement Department struck the average of the actual realizations under the *bhagbatai* system, together with the *mandvi* dues and other miscellaneous rates and taxes levied from the land during the preceding eight years. This average was adopted as the standard (16-anna) demand of the State, to be paid in cash, in two instalments in lieu of all the demands in cash and kind that had been made till then.

To arrive at this result, Mr. Krishnashankar made a thorough investigation of the existing system; ascertained the nature of the various holdings; classified lands according to their fertility; took into account irrigation facilities, if they existed; and defined the boundary lines of each field. He also enquired into the dues paid to the various village servants and obtained exact details as to whether their onus rested upon the State or upon occupants of the land.

The plots comprised in each holding were broadly divided into three classes of *jirayd* (cultivation).

- (1) *Aral* (first class)
- (2) *Doyan* (second class)
- (3) *Soyan* (third class)

Each class was assessed separately.

To prevent arbitrariness, the settlement officers were directed to carry out this work of classifying lands in consultation with the holders themselves. In this way the temptation to squeeze more revenue out of the cultivators was overcome.

In ascertaining the extent of the *lagayd* (irrigated) land only the area that could be watered from the existing wells or other sources of irrigation were taken into account. The Thakore Sahib considered that it was unfair to regard an entire field as irrigated merely because a well with water sufficient to irrigate only a portion of it had been dug in it.

No favouritism could be shown to occupants. The rate of assessment for each class of land was uniform. No official, however great, could vary it to benefit one holder or to wreak vengeance upon another.

The settlement work was complicated and prolonged through lack of foresight during the minority regime. No method for preserving the boundary marks, through periodical field inspection or otherwise, had

been introduced at the time the revenue survey was carried out a decade or more earlier. Many encroachments had taken place and the boundary marks of the survey had almost entirely disappeared in every village.

To bring order out of this chaos, the new department had the field boundaries readjusted according to survey maps, and remeasured and made *pot* numbers where necessary. It took a year to settle field boundaries in all the *khalsa* or *darbari* villages in the *mahals* of the Gondal division of the State. It took another year to execute similar work in the Dhoraji division.

The task that confronted the Department may be judged by the fact that revenue was derived at this time from over a score of sources.

While thus engaged, the Department gathered information that was to prove of great value in future. Statements relating to population, houses and agricultural and other live-stock, were prepared.

Another had to be made showing the classification of lands and the rates of cash assessments, along with an abstract of that statement.

In addition a register of land, whether *Kayem Khardo* or number *Khardo* was made, as well as new survey maps of all the *khalsa* villages of each *mahal* to replace the old ones which were too worn out to be any longer serviceable and which, moreover, had become out of date as the field boundaries were readjusted to correspond with the new survey records.

The task was further complicated by the fact that the proportion of the State share in kind varied with each village. So also did *vero* or cash rate, which was levied in some cases at a certain amount per *Santi* (comprising about 32 acres), in others per

acre; and in others again per *kos* (about 64 acres). Land of superior quality had to pay a higher rate.

Besides the land revenue in kind, cash and in the form of sundry other rates and taxes, certain miscellaneous income pertaining to land was derived by the State, such as the sale of grass in waste lands or preserved grass lands called *vidia*, and *vidkans*; from the cultivation of river-beds; from the sale of fruit and firewood from trees belonging to the State and from the sale proceeds of occupancy rights.

The complexities did not end here. The Department had to prepare a statement containing the carefully calculated cash value of payments hitherto made in kind, to village servants. Those who performed functions of utility to the State or to the rural community in general were, in future, to be remunerated in cash, in commutation of their average receipts in kind for the last eight years. The villages were given the option to requite the persons who served them individually either in kind as theretofore, or in cash, as the parties concerned might desire.

As the work was completed in one *mahal*, the Department's centre of activity was transferred to another. It was so complicated and heavy that it took five years to survey and to settle all the *khalsa* villages.

Mr. Krishnashankar was compelled, on account of ill health, to go on long furlough in 1892—a few months prior to the completion of the operations. He fortunately had prepared, before he left, a detailed statement of the work done; and had drafted a set of rules for implementing the new system. His assistant, Mr. Vishvanath Dulabhram was therefore able to act for him without experiencing any difficulty.

Upon returning from his tour round the world early in 1893, His Highness critically examined the proposals submitted by the Settlement Department. Since they touched the very foundations of his fiscal policy he was anxious to avoid any defects that might cause failure or adversely affect the interests of the cultivators or those of the State.

Having satisfied himself on these points, he ordered the introduction of *vighoti* in all the *kholas* villages, from the beginning of the fiscal year 1893-94. Realizing that success or failure would to a very large extent depend upon the tact, intelligence and efficiency of the revenue officers, from the head of the Department down to the *talatis* and *potels* in the remotest villages, he exhorted them to use all the influence they possessed to explain to the holders of land the advantages of the new system over the one to be superseded.

Concurrent with the introduction of *vighoti*, certain rights and privileges were conferred upon the occupants:

(1) They were made the sole owners of houses and cattle sheds and the yards in which the houses and sheds stood.

(2) They were made competent to dispose of their produce in the fields when and to whom they pleased.

(3) Any improvements they might make were to be theirs. They would not have to share the benefits with any one, not even the State.

(4) They were made competent to transfer or to mortgage their holdings without obtaining any one's prior or subsequent permission.

(5) Their occupancy rights were exempt from sale in execution of decrees of the Civil Courts and the implements of their trade or their seed-grain or certain goods and chattels were not liable to attachment.

The grant of these rights gave security of tenure to the occupants of Government land who until then had been tenants-at-will. It gave them a sense of importance and dignity and (what was perhaps more important) a genuine interest in bettering their condition and the ability to obtain accommodation if they could not do without it. It ended, in short, the era of serfdom and made them free men.

His Highness did not extort money or service from the *tyots* in return for the advantages he conferred upon them. They did not have to pay one pie in *nazrana* for the concessions. Had he chosen to follow the practice pursued elsewhere, he might have been able to squeeze from Rs.50,00,000 to Rs.1,00,00,000 from the cultivators in consideration of those boons. He no doubt saw the opportunity, but refused to stoop to it.

He even issued an edict freeing his subjects of all obligation to render service to him or to his officials without payment. Had the times been more propitious he would have abolished forced labour entirely. In view of the political exigencies he did not feel however that he could absolve his people from rendering such service to officials connected with the Agency maintained by the Government of Bombay at Rajkot, or neighbouring States. He made an exception in their favour. But he took the earliest opportunity to remove even this burden.

5

Persons who had expected trouble when the new system was announced were surprised. Notoriously suspicious of innovations of whatever character though the cultivators were, they did not lack shrewdness. They consequently hailed the settlement as a great blessing. It did away with the annoyances and losses

to which they had been subjected in disposing of their produce under *bhagbutai*. They looked forward eagerly to its adoption and even pressed for its early introduction.

The *Grasias* and *Jiraidars*, on the other hand, were bitterly opposed to the settlement. They knew that it would free the tenants from their grip. They therefore insisted upon retaining the old system, so far as their own estates were concerned.

His Highness could not compel the landlords to give their tenants the benefit of the new system. He however tried to induce them to move with the times. They gradually accepted the inevitable and brought their methods of assessment in line with those adopted by the Government. By the time five years had passed practically all revenue collection in Gondal had been thus regularized.

Cautiousness had led the Ruler to determine that at the end of the first ten years the new system should be carefully reviewed and any hardship that might have been discovered in its working should be removed. This proviso might also have been used to rectify any mistake that might have been made in assessing the revenue in the case of any holding at too low a figure.

Resettlement operations conducted in neighbouring States and British Indian districts every two or three decades are indeed fruitful sources of revenue. But Bhagvat Sinhjee has refrained from taking recourse to this measure, even to the point of foregoing the option he had expressly reserved for himself.

His subjects therefore enjoy "permanent settlement," though this term is not applied officially to describe the tenure. Even when prices were soaring as they were during the world-war, no attempt was made to compel them to make a larger contribution to the State coffers.

His Highness appears to regard the revenue derived from the land as royalty paid by the lessees, rather than as tax or rent.

One of the fears expressed at the time this reform was introduced was that the land would pass out of the hands of the agricultural classes into those of non-cultivators. Subsequent experience has proved that it was wholly unjustified.

Some of the non-cultivators who acquire land take, moreover, to tilling the soil.

6

The cultivators are, as a general rule, industrious and thrifty. They seldom take recourse to borrowing and when pushed by necessity they secure accommodation, if possible, from a fellow-farmer rather than from a professional money-lender.

The credit of the cultivators is, in any case, high. The interest rates usually ruling in the State are so low and accommodation so easy to obtain, that the need for organizing co-operative credit societies has not been felt.

Another fear entertained at the time of the introduction of the settlement was that the State would be merciless in its demand and the farmer would suffer in consequence. The reverse has been the experience. The Revenue Department has regarded the rates fixed as the maximum that they could collect when all went well with the farmers. When the rain was scanty, or too much, or unseasonable, or the crops suffered through the visitation of mice or locusts or some other calamity, the demand was lowered, in proportion to the peasant's losses. In the pages that follow there will be many references to the remissions granted and the arrears of revenue foregone by the Thakore Sahib. Up to the end of 1933-34, they totalled Rs 57,50,000.

Had the Thakore Sahib been anxious to place a narrow interpretation upon the grant of occupancy rights, he might have declined to assume any responsibility for providing water for irrigation and other purposes. So interested had he been however in the welfare of his "gold-yielding trees" that he has built two large tanks, to which reference will be made in Chapter XVII; and has instructed the Revenue Department to be liberal in granting loans at low rates of interest, and at times without interest, for sinking wells. The number of wells has steadily increased from 2795 in 1883 to 7904 in 1934 as the result of this policy.

This agricultural policy has resulted in steadily decreasing the cultivable area not under the plough. It now constitutes less than five per cent. of the *Khalsa* land capable of being tilled.

Land has greatly risen in value during Bhagvat Sinhjee's reign. It is so highly prized indeed that it is difficult to persuade any cultivator to part with his holding at any price.

The artisan and labouring classes are showing an inclination to invest their savings in land. It is not at all improbable therefore that before long not an acre that can be advantageously brought under the plough will be permitted to lie idle.

Since 1900 the State has maintained a Court of Wards to safeguard the interests of the minors among the *Bhayals*, *Grazias* and others whose estates are, or are likely to become, encumbered during their minority. Experienced officers placed on duty to supervise, improve and develop them, have put an end to sharp practices on the part of unscrupulous hangers-on. On attaining majority, the young landlords find themselves in a much better position than they otherwise would have been, though many of them soon fritter away their substance and get into debt.

CHAPTER XIV

Protection of Life and Property

1

Situated as Gondal was, it could extirpate outlawry only with the co-operation of the surrounding States. Relentless war must be carried to the lairs in Junagadh, Navanagar, Bhavnagar and other neighbouring territories to which dacoits fled after raiding Bhagvat Sinhjee's villages.

The more he thought over the subject during his student days in Edinburgh the more he was convinced that this was the course to follow. Before he could do so however he would have to induce the neighbouring administrations to take a similar view of the matter.

Much to his disappointment he found upon his return that these administrations were much more disposed to saddle Gondal with the blame for outlawry than to make common cause with one another to put an end to it. To absolve his people from this injustice and also to promote joint action, he had an authoritative statement prepared showing in concise terms that, in this matter, Gondal was more sinned against than sinning. There had not been a dacoit band of Gondal subjects for many years. Individuals owing allegiance to Bhagvat Sinhjee had, in fact, been

concerned in but few cases. The four convicts who had escaped from the Gondal jail, as stated in Chapter VIII., and who had doubtless joined one or another dacoit gang, were Junagadh and Bantwa subjects.

"Armed bands of restless and warlike classes and desperate characters" found shelter in territories surrounding Gondal. They consisted of *badmashes* or of escaped prisoners, "or other needy and greedy" rascals who were chiefly subjects of other States," and obtained food and shelter in their territories.

The brigands were in possession of arms that gave them a decided advantage over the unarmed villagers. The *Bhayats*, *Mulgrasias* and *Jivaidars*—originally warriors—were, "in spite of repeated requests on their part, left under the present system of licensing arms in the Province, almost unprovided with similar weapons of defence."

In view of Gondal's geographical position it was easy for the gangs to descend upon its outlying villages and dash back, loaded with booty, to their hiding places. Jurisdictional and territorial difficulties had impeded His Highness' police in their efforts to trace and to capture the offenders.

Nor was it fair that Gondal should be "placed in the false position of having to undertake and pay for the costly and thankless task of ensuring the good conduct" of non-Gondalis. There would have been "some justification for tolerating such a state of affairs if it resulted in ensuring security for the Gondal villages against *badmashes* (chiefly Junagadh and Jamnagar subjects)." But it did not appear to be just that Gondal should have "to suffer for the sins of others" and in addition should "have even the remotest reason to fear that its position and much more its action should be liable to be misunderstood or misjudged."

It was a difficult matter to track down dacoits. No matter how much might be promised in the shape of reward in cash and grants of land—however tempting the bait held out—the villagers all over the State were so frightened that they would not give any information leading to their capture. The awe in which the robbers were held was intensified when an informer in the service of the State was attacked and killed in his own house at Kutabpura in the Bantwa Taluka.

The Thakore Sahib took immediate action to create a spirit of confidence in the people of the country-side. The murdered man's funeral expenses were paid. His family was provided for. His son, a minor, was given a pension of Rs.6 a month until he came of age, after which he would be enrolled in the Police.

Despite these efforts, the quest was not entirely successful. Men wanted for robberies remained at large and the villagers were afraid of co-operating with the authorities in tracking them down.

The dacoits were ruthless in their methods of terrorism. For example, a gang that had just looted a village met a farmer on the road driving his cart. They ordered him to stop and when he did not instantly obey their command shot him down, fearing that, if allowed to go on his way, he would inform the village police.

2

The rounding-up operations culminated in a pitched battle at Gana in August, 1888—an epic event in the annals of the Gondal police. The ring-leaders were killed, captured or surrendered and the bandits were dispersed, for the time being.

What was even more important, all the Kathiawar States adopted rules to secure mutual co-operation for the prevention and detection of dacoity, highway robbery and other heinous crimes. This action had a salutary effect. The brigands found that instead of being able to hide, as they had in the past, in some other State after committing a crime in a neighbouring territory, they were ceaselessly hunted from place to place and were scarcely able to cook a meal. Haunts where they were likely to find shelter were destroyed or guarded.

Thanas (guards) were maintained on hills near the border and at other strategic points. Patrols constantly scoured the country where they might be expected to skulk. Particularly effective means were taken to prevent them from hiding in the hilly tracts in the vicinity of Dhoraji and to pursue them in the event of any clue being obtained as to their whereabouts in that part of the State.

One sacrifice involved in these operations pained the Thakore Sahib. The caves in the hills overlooking Dhank—at one time the capital of Saurashtra—had to be destroyed to prevent the robbers from taking refuge in them. They possessed some archaeological value and he would have liked to save them; but no other alternative presented itself to him at the time. He also had to have some of the new plantations of babul trees thinned to prevent lawless persons from hiding in them.

3

The gang that raided Chikhaliya in 1913 were, for instance, pursued from place to place until eight out of the 11 dacoits were apprehended and awarded deterrent punishment. Similarly, in 1922, the band of *haramkhore* mostly Miyanas, who entered Monpuri—

a small village in Sarsai Mahal, disguised as foreign village police and disarmed the *pasaitas*, met their match in the police *patel* and two of his men. They experienced no difficulty in disarming the men on duty at the gate. Before they had however proceeded very far in abstracting gold and silver ornaments and other valuables from the terrified villagers they were surprised by the *patel*—a Brahman—and the two *pasaitas*. The headman was killed and the two *pasaitas* were wounded; but before they had been put out of action they had killed three and wounded one of the robbers and compelled the remainder to take to their heels.

His Highness greatly admired the heroism shown by these three men. He bestowed *jivai* upon the *patel's* family and also upon the two *pasaitas*, who recovered from their wounds.

By this time the police had learnt their lesson. They had realized that security could be given to life and property only by eternal vigilance upon their part.

Certain danger zones were marked out. Gondal villages in the proximity of the Gir—the only forest in India where the lion still roams at will—the long range of the Alech Hills, till lately the Wagher stronghold and the long, deep valley of the Bhadar, in places wooded through the exertions of the Forest Department, required policing with special care. An eye had to be kept on the southern boundary of the Upleta Mahal lest the Sindhis of Sodhana and Vadala (both in Junagadh State) give trouble to the peaceful, industrious and thrifty subjects of Bhagvat Sinhjee, who stationed, as long as was necessary, armed guards for their protection.

The introduction of the telephone and the motor car has greatly strengthened the hands of the autho-

rities in their warfare against the outlaws. It no longer takes hours for news of an outrage to reach a police station and hours more for the police officials to arrive upon the spot travelling on horseback, by which time the bandits have scurried away to the security of their lairs.

To-day the alarm would be given, within a few minutes of the perpetration of the crime, to every police station in the State and, where telephone connection exists, even to bordering States, if a dacoity were to occur. The police along all the roads by which the bandits must travel to make their escape would be on the look-out for them.

The high officials and detectives would hurry to the place in motor cars or catch a convenient motor-bus or railway train, if equally convenient. The brigands would soon find themselves entangled in the fine-meshed net of the law.

People still talk of the round-up of a gang in which the telephone was first used in circumstances to most of them novel and dramatic. Garnala, a village in Junagadh State, was raided by a gang of robbers. Men rushed from there into Kolithad—a prosperous village in Gondal—not far distant and by means of the telephone information was broadcasted that led to the capture of the dacoits.

5

Action taken from time to time to improve the efficiency and morale of the force has been remarkably successful. Special attention is paid to making the police present a smart appearance, to drilling them, to promoting literacy among them, to giving them instruction in the rudiments of law and cognate subjects and coaching the members of the detective branch in the work of tracing criminals.

A workshop for repairing the uniforms and weapons of the police is maintained at Gondal.

The police lines at each station have been so reconstructed, under His Highness' watchful eye, that each member of the force and his family can be allotted two large and two small rooms covering 1,200 square feet. A mezanine floor, a courtyard and a shed assigned to them, add another 1,300 square feet.

Near the police offices in each station are commodious dressing rooms and armouries. The police quarters have all been built in open spaces and provided with wells and other facilities. Roads have been made between the separate blocks of houses and trees planted on both sides to form shaded avenues.

Spacious yards and store-houses have been made for cattle and stocked with an abundant supply of fodder and water for them. Large and suitable stables have been built for the horses of the mounted police.

Every police station is provided with a telephone which, on payment of a small fee, is available for public use.

The improvement in the living conditions of the police extends to the remotest villages. The design adopted takes the form of a gateway with a tower on either side. It is meant to serve as a memorial to Bha Kumbhoji—the towers being known as Kumbhoji's watch towers—and at the same time to serve the present requirements of police protection.

Reward, in one shape or another, given to men who had rendered meritorious service in tracking and capturing criminals and maintaining law and order, has made service in the Police Department very popular. Provision of uniform and equipment, schemes of grading the constables and officers, assuring them fixity of tenure, guaranteeing them leave, scarcity allowances, bonuses and pensions to superannuated

members of the force and, in deserving cases, to their families; the establishment of a provident fund system that enables the men, upon retirement, to receive a substantial sum over and above their pension and gratuities, has further enhanced its popularity.

Many non-Gondalis seek admission into the ranks of the constabulary. His Highness however unflinchingly pursues a determined policy of giving preference to his own subjects, engaging men of good family and education as police officers and insisting upon their passing a departmental examination. He will not be happy until the entire force, from top to bottom, is Gondalised.

The expenditure incurred on the police was, in 1927-28, two and a half times the amount spent in 1883.

The strength of the Regular police works out at 3.7 men per 1,000 persons in the State. There is one policeman for a little less than a mile.

CHAPTER XV

Speedy Justice

1

No function of sovereignty was considered by the law-givers of old (the *miti* and *artha-shastra-hars*) to be of greater importance than justice. The ease with which aggrieved persons could approach the Raja and the readiness with which he protected the innocent and punished the guilty constituted the principal test to be applied to an administration.

This conception became so rooted in the Hindu mind that Rajas vied with one another in making themselves accessible to complainants and in dealing with them impartially. To be known as "the just" became the highest ambition of a ruler. The term "unjust" became the most stinging abuse that could be flung at a sovereign.

Various considerations compelled a Raja often to delegate this function to others. He had neither the time nor the energy personally to listen to every plaint and enquire into the facts before he adjudicated upon it. Nor was it fair to compel litigants from the four corners of his kingdom to repair to the capital to secure the redressing of their wrongs. Officials therefore had to be employed to assist the king in the performance of this function.

Through such means the Raja might lighten his burden: but he could not thereby rid himself of responsibility. In the degree in which his deputies fell short of the highest standard of equity, they exposed him to the contumely of the world. Injustice upon the part of his agents was counted as a dereliction upon his part, the gravity of which could not be overlooked.

2

Before Bhagvat Sinhjee came into power he had made up his mind to conform to the highest standards laid down in this respect by the ancient law-givers. He had determined that justice should not only be even-handed but also speedy—that it should be available at the doors of his people.

Bhagvat Sinhjee's tour in England, prior to his investiture, had made him all the more eager to carry out these ideals. Despite his admiration for things English, he was critical of the English system of dispensing justice. A visit to the Law Courts in London made him write:

"The building appeared to me to be rather intricate...appropriately so, perhaps, to be in keeping with the mazes of the law! It is a good hint to those who are too litigiously inclined! It is easy to enter it: but to come out safe and successful is both doubtful and difficult."

The fault, he thought, lay "not so much with the people as with the procedure, which is tardy, and often drags a weary length of time." Human laws, he moralized,

"...however minutely and elaborately drawn up, will always be imperfect. They should be the means of giving not mere justice, but justice in the simplest way possible."

So far as he was personally concerned, he would leave "a good deal to the wise discretion of the judges, who should be men of tried honesty and integrity, and well worthy of confidence." This remark deserves to be noted since it was made when he stood upon the threshold of power.

Trial by jury appealed to him and he urged the adoption of that system in India. The numberless castes into which his countrymen were divided and sub-divided, he thought, "might be utilized as auxiliaries in deciding civil cases at least."

It would be easy to take such action, since every caste, generally speaking, had

"...a council of five headmen with a *patel* or president, to check all sorts of irregularities among the members of the community. The office of the president is in some cases hereditary and in others elective. In former times his power was great, but now only traces of it are discernible."

"If a new lease of power were granted to the different castes in conformity with the altered state of circumstances, if the councils elected by the members of different castes were recognized by the Government, and if these councils were authorized to try certain civil and criminal cases, I think, the work of administering justice would be greatly facilitated, litigation would be very much reduced, and the dispensation of justice would be cheap and speedy.

"The power would only be exercised when both the parties belonged to the same caste. Should the parties belong to different castes, then the old indigenous system of panchayat or arbitration might be profitably made use of. This would be a great step towards the much-talked-of local self-government."

3

In translating into actuality the ideals he had formed so early in life, Bhagvat Sinhjee wisely decided to call to his aid men of education and character. Hardly had he taken over the reins of administration when he began to fill each vacancy that occurred in the Judiciary or each new post he created, with men who had a degree obtained in law from a university. He did not deviate from that principle even in the few cases in which he appointed men descended from the same clan as himself to judicial posts. It took years to bring about the change: but he did not rest satisfied until the whole judicial fabric had been renovated. He did not find it feasible, in actual practice, to revive the panchayat system, but devised other means to achieve his object.

Mr. T. P. Sampat, who occupies the highest position in the department, is a brilliant law graduate of the Bombay University. He is highly respected for his quickness of comprehension of facts and for keeping himself posted with the judgments of the High Courts in British India and the Judicial Committee of His Majesty's Privy Council.

In the early years it was necessary to maintain a Bhayati Court for the adjudication of disputes in which the *Bhayata* were, in one way or another, involved. It was almost immediately amalgamated with the office of Judicial Assistant in the Huzar Court, the same officer being in charge of both posts.

As the Judiciary is now composed, it consists of the Courts of First Instance and those exercising revision or appellate authority usually in addition to Original Jurisdiction.

Application for appeal, revision or review, must be filed within 30 days. To ensure speedy justice His Highness has ruled that every original case, be

it civil or criminal, must be disposed of within a period of six months from the date it is filed or the complaint is laid. In cases of a complicated character where delay is unavoidable, subordinate courts must ask the Huzur Court for extension of the period in each case, setting forth the reasons for making such application. The first Appellate Court is similarly required to dispose of appeals within three months from the date of entry.

Every Judge, civil or criminal, must deliver his judgment at the latest within ten days after hearing the arguments in behalf of the parties is concluded.

The Huzur Court disposes of all cases, civil or criminal, within one month after they are filed and delivers judgment the day following the one on which arguments are concluded.

Execution against movable property must be completed within five months of the pronouncement of judgment and that against immovable property within six months.

4

While refusing to interfere with the course of justice, Bhagvat Sinhjee has never shirked his duties as the final court of appeal. He looks upon that function as not so much a prerogative with him as an obligation laid upon him by his *dharma* (religion).

Any complainant may approach him any day of the year and, in emergent cases, even at night. The guards at the entrance gate of the "Huzur Bungalow" dare not prevent the poorest peasant or labourer from proceeding to him. Nor may any personal attendant stand in the way of a person seeking an interview with the Ruler.

It is a case of first come, first seen. If an humble cultivator precedes a minister, the minister must wait

until the Thakore Sahib has finished talking with the farmer.

5

If His Highness could have his own way he would sacrifice the revenue that he derives through the judiciary and would have all quarrels settled amicably rather than have them dragged through one or more courts. He would not have the least compunction in depriving the lawyers of the income they obtain from their clients because he would not only save expense and worry to the simple villagers but also help to revive the panchayat system which, in the old days, worked efficiently to promote quiet and contentment in the country-side.

Legal assistance has also tended to become costlier as His Highness has insisted upon permitting only qualified men to practise in his courts. Pleaders and *mukhtears* must satisfactorily undergo a test in law and procedure prior to being granted a license.

The laws current in the State are

"...virtually the adoption of the laws of British India. There are some special and local laws enacted but they are comparatively few."

CHAPTER XVI

An Educational Experiment

I

The Rulers of Gondal, in days of old, gave tracts of land, large and small, to persons who had helped them in their conquests or who were related to them in some degree. This gift constituted their *gras* (morsel) and they were designated as *Grasias* (holders of morsels). Similar grants were made to temples and religious institutions and were known as *dharmada*.

Among the Rajputs there are horizontal but not perpendicular social divisions. There are castes: but within each caste every individual is the equal of every other. One man may rule a State in his own right and name and another may be his humblest servant. One may be immensely wealthy and the other a pauper. Socially however they are on the same plane. So they are, at least, in theory.

Pride of birth characterizes the Rajputs perhaps more than any other section of the Hindus. The ties of blood and marriage among them, constitute bonds not easily broken or shaken.

Such ties have their merits. They knit people closely—almost indissolubly—together. There are always persons to share one's weal or woe. Adversity does not have quite the same sting for men and women born in such a community as for those who

live in a society where the individual rather than the family or the clan forms the unit.

There are also disadvantages. The goad of need is often wanting and the sense of initiative and responsibility frequently remains undeveloped. A placid disposition is handed down from father to son, lending fascination to gentility even when accompanied by grinding poverty. It is as if ambition had been chloroformed.

Discipline is not easy to maintain in a community that puts a premium upon privileges and attaches little value to mutual obligations. Over-sensitiveness in respect of equality leads sometimes to estrangement and even to brawls. It is, in fact, not at all uncommon for family feuds to be handed down to posterity as a part of the inheritance.

Long before Bhagvat Sinhjee came into power these institutions had produced grave complications in the State, as they had indeed in all the neighbouring territories. Many of the *Grasias* had fallen low in the financial scale through the fragmentation of family domains, or imprudence, or both. Generally speaking, the higher the standing of persons of this class, the more they had suffered.

Most *Grasias* looked with envy and suspicion upon their rulers. Conflict naturally resulted from such mistrust. Complaints of aggression on the part of one Raja or another were carried to the *prant* officers stationed at convenient centres in Kathiawar, or even to Rajkot and Bombay. Action taken by the British, however tactful, was a fruitful cause of misunderstanding and friction between them and the Rajas.

The *Mulgrasias* were particularly suspicious of the motives of the Rajas. The British had been persuaded, soon after they secured a foothold in Kathiawar, to guarantee the inviolability of their holdings and rights,

The Rajas regarded such action as interference upon the part of the British and resented it bitterly. They quoted the treaties into which they had entered with the plenipotentiaries of the Honourable East India Company to prove that such intervention was unwarranted. The agents of the Bombay Government however countered these contentions by pointing to clauses that, by implication if not directly, gave them the right to stand, in case of necessity, between a ruler and a *Grasia*.

In 1873 an institution known as the Rajasthanik (States') Court was set up at Rajkot, as a part of the Agency machinery. The explanation given for its establishment may be thus summarized:

The Political Agent's Camp was crowded, it was claimed, with landlords who had grievances against the Rajas within whose territories they lived. In the effort to secure redress for real or fancied wrongs, they dogged the footsteps of the representative of the Bombay Government who, it was further claimed, was loath to interfere. His unwillingness to intervene often resulted, it was contended, in *Grasias* taking the law into their own hands and harrassing the Rajas until their demands were conceded or some sort of compromise was arrived at.

The situation became so grave, the British explanation ran, that, after a number of conferences between officials of the Bombay Government and the rulers of the Kathiawar States, it was decided, in 1873, to set up a court administered by an officer of experience elected by Kathiawar chiefs with the assistance of assessors from the more important States, to act as a final referee in disputes between the rulers and the landlords. Simultaneously a survey establishment was instituted to demarcate the lands that, according to the judgment of the Court, rightfully belonged to the *Grasias*.

2

Ties of blood united Bhagvat Sinhjee to some of the *Grasias*. He felt genuinely sorry for the faded grandees. They had fallen from a high estate. They had, in the olden days, "played an important and honourable part in the administration of the country, and had been noted for their mental culture no less than for their muscular strength."

"By a combination of evil circumstances the *Grasias* had deteriorated in every respect. A false notion of family pride had led them to be extravagant when they ought to have been frugal and judicious in the use of their money and especially when the landed possessions originally inherited had been subjected to a cruel process of division and subdivision, in most cases to ruinous extent."

Reduced to want, they often became "prey to fraudulent money-lenders." Neglect of education rendered them "incapable of defending themselves against those usurers and other artful deceivers."

It greatly saddened him, he said, to note "that while other communities were progressing, this important and once chivalrous class was moving back-ward." He yearned to arrest their decay—to uplift them.

Mature reflection led him to conclude that lack of education was the chief cause of their troubles. "Too proud to send their sons to the ordinary schools and too poor to send them to any of the special institutions established in the province for the aristocracy, they let them remain in gross ignorance or perpetual childhood," as an Eastern proverb had it.

Education, he felt, was a "tonic for the mind as physical exercise was for the body." It fitted "a man for any calling." It impelled different sections of the community to "vie with one another in the grand intellectual race."

Since the *Grasias* had permitted their prejudices to override their interests and were lagging behind in the race of life, he determined to give a chance to the boys of this generation that their sires had never had. He would establish, for their special benefit, an institution that would fit them to play an honourable role in the State.

This institution, he decided, must be residential. His experience at the Rajkumar College and his travels in Europe had made him a firm believer in the healthy influence exercised by life in a boarding school under proper supervision. It taught young men the virtue of self-discipline and self-reliance. It inculcated in them "habits of punctuality."

He knew that it would be no easy matter to "reconcile the *Grasias* with even a temporary separation from their children." The advantages offered by the system were so great however that he deemed it wise to exert all the influence he could to wean them from their prejudices.

3

Critics of the scheme he formulated were not wanting. Some of them went to the length of trying to alarm him. They argued that the *Grasias* were "generally at variance with the Durbar—that there was a "real or supposed gulf of ill feeling between the two." It would therefore be imprudent to tear from the eyes of the *Grasias* the bandage that darkened their intellectual vision. Since knowledge was power, this backward and ignorant class would, "when armed with a new weapon, be irresistible and prove troublesome to the Durbar."

This sort of reasoning failed to disturb him. He let his critics understand that he believed in the "exalting influence of education." It seldom failed "to ennoble and to humanize the instincts."

The excellence "of a good cause must assert itself sooner or later," he assured his faint-hearted advisers. Only knowledge and culture could overcome prejudices and reveal facts as they really were.

He knew no way of inculcating good citizenship and promoting a sense of loyalty except by spreading liberal education among a people. This was "the only natural remedy" that suggested itself for improving the conditions of the *Grasias* and removing the rot that was "gradually corroding the very root of their existence." He expected that it would "bridge the gulf of unfriendliness, if it really existed, and enable the *Grasias* to be wiser and happier."

Resolutely brushing aside all fears and doubts, he perfected his plans. The fees were to be low enough to enable even poor *Grasias* to maintain their sons at the school. Members of that class residing outside Gondal could take advantage of the institution, but would have to pay at a slightly higher rate than those who had a natural claim upon the State. Even then the scale would be lower than at the Talukdari *Grasia* School maintained by the Political Agency at Wadhwan.

4

The foundation-stone of the *Grasia* College was laid in the first week of April 1895. Colonel Hancock was invited to perform the ceremony. Twenty years earlier he had, as the official presiding over the Rajasthanik Court, been engaged in composing differences between the landed magnates and the *Rajas* and was known to be keenly interested in the upliftment of that class.

In asking Colonel Hancock to lay the foundation-stone, His Highness delivered a speech, somewhat lengthy for a man who believed in deeds rather than in words, in which he took care to show that schools of this type were not entirely new in our country.

"In former times we had in India," he said, "special schools for special guilds and classes, more or less patronized by the State but chiefly conducted by private enterprise." Circumstances had changed.

"Since the promulgation of the great educational despatch of the East India Company in 1854, supposed to have been drafted by John Stuart Mill, a new era" had dawned. Recognizing their duties and responsibilities the Government of India and the administrations in the Indian States were doing everything in their power to stimulate "the intellectual advance of the various classes of people living under their respective jurisdictions."

His object in establishing that institution was "to rescue a useful and important class from the thralldom of ignorance." He took the opportunity to draw attention to the handicaps under which they laboured—mostly of their own making. He also unequivocally affirmed his faith in the power of liberalizing knowledge to heal old sores."

5

In a short speech Colonel Hancock agreed with His Highness that the *Grasias* themselves were almost entirely to blame for the depressing condition in which they lived. They were "too proud to send their sons to the ordinary village school and too poor to send them to the Talukdari *Grasia* School at Wadhwan."

He looked upon the institution planned by Bhagvat Sinhjee as "one of very great importance and a long step in advance towards the amelioration of the conditions of a large class of people whose education had hitherto been entirely neglected." He hoped that the low scale of fees generously prescribed by the Thakore Sahib would "attract most of those boys who were getting no tutoring at all, give them a

suitable education, and by degrees turn them into more reasonable human beings than their forefathers, less ready to listen to every designing person who tried to trade upon their ignorance and less suspicious of the good faith of their rulers at every turn."

In a good-humoured way he warned His Highness that "the acquisition of knowledge" would render the *Grasias* "all the more sensitive to real injustice." He advised him to keep a strict watch on his subordinate officials to prevent it. He knew only too well that both the warning and the advice were superfluous.

Colonel Hancock, in fact, could not help expressing astonishment at His Highness' gesture. While in the immediate past the Rulers of Gondal had spent thousands of rupees in resisting the *Grasias*' claims, now Bhagvat Sinhjee had come forward to establish a costly institution for the benefit of that very class. He considered this a sign of good augury and congratulated His Highness on setting such a worthy example to his brother rulers.

Mr. Meruji Dosaji, a *Grasia* who had recently graduated from the Bombay University, expressed the "deep sense of gratitude that his brother *Grasias* entertained towards his host for the keen interest he was taking in improving their educational status." The scheme, he said, was "so noble and far-reaching" that one could not help remarking that "His Highness, with the instincts of a doctor," had "rightly diagnosed the disease which was undermining the constitution of the *Grasias*."

6

The institution was planned on a generous scale. The main building was 375 feet in length with a verandah ten feet wide running all around it. It contained a central hall measuring 60 by 40 feet, to be

used for purposes of assembly, dramatic performances and the like. The rest was divided into class and lecture rooms and laboratories.

The main building was supported by two wings, each 90 feet in length and 30 feet in breadth, including a verandah in front ten feet wide. They were intended to serve as dormitories. The kitchens and servants' quarters were situated a little way from the main building.

7

Shortly after the foundation-stone was laid the Thakore Sahib proceeded to Britain to see his eldest son installed at Eton. While there he made a diligent search for a suitable Principal for the institution.

After according personal interviews to a number of candidates, Mr. S. K. Moore, a Cambridge Honours man in the Natural Science Tripos, was appointed. He had for some time been Lecturer in Botany at the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth and was then the Senior Science Master at the Royal Grammar School at Sheffield.

Upon his arrival in India Mr. Moore was associated with two graduates of the Bombay University—Mr. Chhotalal C. Sutariya, B.A. and Mr. Pranshankar B. Joshi, B.A. Between them they worked out the scheme of study, rules of conduct and other necessary details.

Preliminary arrangements had to be expedited as requests poured in for opening the institution earlier than had been planned. These demands greatly encouraged His Highness. He felt that the people he was trying to help were shaking off some of their inertia.

8

Work was actually begun before the main building had been completed. Sixteen *Gracias* joined on the

first day (April 1, 1897). By May 15th, when the first term ended, there were 22 boys in residence.

His Highness closely watched the work. As Mr. Moore stated on a subsequent occasion, he recollected with some dismay the frequency of the interviews he had with the Thakore Sahib during the early days of the College.

It was decided that the motto should be "*Vicharaya! Vicharaya!* (Think! Think!). As it indicated, the teachers' efforts were to be directed towards influencing the students to think clearly and independently instead of merely cramming knowledge down their throats.

The Thakore Sahib bestowed great thought upon designing the College crest. As his private secretary, Mr. Harikrishna Dave, described it:

"Hindus believe in innumerable gods and goddesses who are in reality the personification of various powers or energies of Nature. Of all these powers three are supposed to be pre-eminent. They are known by the names of Saraswati (goddess of knowledge and learning), Lakshmi (goddess of fortune and prosperity) and Kali (goddess of knowledge and wisdom) and are represented in the crest by their emblems. The open book represents learning, as Saraswati is supposed always to hold an open book in her hand. The lotus is the favourite flower of Lakshmi and is therefore an emblem of general prosperity. Of the several names of the third power, Kali, one is light and the burning torch is an appropriate symbol of that power. The position of the State crest in the upper part of the shield shows that the Grasia College is under the Durbar's protection, and as the College is dedicated to learning, it is apt that the peacock on

which the Indian Minerva generally rides should be placed at the top."

9

Work at the College was divided into four grades; the Preparatory, the Lower, the Middle and the Upper.

The "Prep" was meant for boys, not less than seven years of age, who had little or no previous schooling. They were taught English, Gujarati and arithmetic. After they had proved their ability they were promoted to the "Lower Grade." Those who could take advantage of teaching in that Grade were admitted directly into it.

The boys were classified independently for English, Gujarati and mathematics. In this way progress in one subject would not be retarded by failure in another; and a boy would not be promoted in any subject till sufficient progress had been made in it to justify his being advanced to a higher form.

A form-master was placed in charge of each form or class. No outside tutors were allowed, but individual attention was given to backward boys, each according to his special requirements, in preparing for examinations.

Since the institution was frankly modelled upon the pattern of the English public school, it was considered necessary to devote a great deal of attention to teaching English. A series of exercises were employed that would develop a mastery of English grammar and idiom "in an orderly and rational manner" instead of merely making the boys memorize phrases from readers, as in other schools. They were given typical sentences and asked to define words and to deduce grammatical rules and to trace idiomatic irregularities.

Reference was made, whenever necessary, to the Gujarati way of conveying the same sense, as it was

felt that it would help them to understand the English phraseology. At every step "organized practice" was insisted upon, "much more time being devoted to translation from the familiar vernacular into the strange English than to the far easier converse process."

The vocabulary employed consisted of words used in daily life. It was hoped that thereby the boys would feel that they were learning something that would be of practical utility to them and thus their interest would be roused and maintained. It was also expected that the effort they would be required to put forth would render their future progress rapid and sure. The time thus saved could be allotted to other subjects.

Stress was laid upon the teaching of physics and chemistry by demonstration and also upon mathematics. In the upper mathematical class a scheme of practical work was devised, starting with measurements of length and proceeding to measurements of area, volume, and so on. The arithmetical problems were so framed as to impress the students with the importance of arithmetic in actual life and the necessity for absolute accuracy; and at the same time to encourage habits of careful observation and reflection.

The meals were partaken of in company with the house-master in a common dining-hall. Caste and credal difficulties were minimized by seating each student, whatever his race or religion, on *palla* (a low stool) and placing his food on a similar low stool in front of him.

No differentiation was permitted in the fare served, except on medical grounds. This rule levelled all distinctions—made favouritism impossible. In the beginning it caused much resentment among boys who had been brought up as their mothers' pets. Rigid enforcement however soon demonstrated the wisdom of the course adopted.

The boys slept in large, airy dormitories. They were not allowed to keep their own servants.

The grounds in front and at the back of the main building were utilized as playing fields. A swimming bath was built on the river's bank. The two boats provided were used whenever the water in the Gondli was deep enough to permit rowing.

Out of school hours the boys were in charge of a resident master. Like themselves, he was a *Grasia*.

Character-building was as much the concern of the teachers as instruction in the arts and sciences. To assist them in maintaining discipline in the class room and dormitories, boys who showed special aptitude for leadership were appointed prefects. This system helped to develop a sense of initiative and responsibility in them.

A healthier social atmosphere was created by throwing the boys closely together in conditions of equality than could have been possible had they occupied separate residences, as was the practice in some Indian schools. They developed a fine *esprit de corps*—learnt lessons of helpfulness, self-restraint and independence. They also formed attachments that death alone could dissolve.

The dormitory system moreover greatly facilitated discipline. Since the students were constantly associated with the teachers, there was no need to hold a parade at any time for the sake of supervision.

10

The formal opening was deferred until the end of November, 1898, when Lord Sandhurst paid a brief visit to Gondal. Prior to his appointment as the Governor of Bombay he had been a member of the London School Board. The insight he had thereby acquired into educational needs and methods proved of great assistance to him during his Governorship.

In formally opening the new institution, His Excellency complimented the Thakore Sahib upon the "great liberality of mind" shown by him in building a "college costing about Rs. 3,00,000 and...entailing an outlay of Rs. 7,000 a year, to assist those who were not in a position to assist themselves." He had been "immensely struck by the imposing nature of the building" that had just been completed and "in which everything, including the clock in the tower, was of local make." With its ample grounds it was surpassed by nothing he had seen in India. It would take no very imaginative boy to feel inspired with awe and responsibility for keeping up the honour of his school, after one glance at the "most majestic pile."

His Excellency was particularly impressed with the way in which ventilation had been provided for in all the rooms. He found the dormitories spacious and lofty.

"I do think," he remarked in this connection, "that under rules and arrangements such as we have seen, every opportunity is given to boys to grow and progress favourably." Nothing appeared to him to have been left undone for the young fellows who will be educated in it.

He noted with particular satisfaction the attention given to scientific training. The workshop, he thought, was a most interesting part of the institution.

Lord Sandhurst spoke about the unhappy plight of the *Grasias*. The peaceful conditions prevailing in Kathiawar, he said, deprived them of "one of their most fascinating occupations—that of soldiering." They therefore found themselves without any occupation and without the means of improving their estates, perhaps in some cases even of living on them. He therefore felt that His Highness had done well "to see how,

from the amplitude of his own fortune, he could best set about reinstating them in the position they once held."

If the *Grasias* were to regain the position to which historic conditions entitled them, they must be fitted to manage their ancestral property and encouraged to seek careers that would provide them with occupation and supplement their resources. Education that would fit them to hold their proper position as the landed gentry of the province was their primary need.

Elementary knowledge that would "prevent them from becoming the victims of fraud and chicanery," was not, in itself, sufficient for their purpose. Their character needed also to be carefully formed.

At the State banquet that night His Highness enlarged upon this truth. Character, he said was the foundation on which the whole structure of civilization rested and therefore the most important duty in life was the training of it. As Lord Sandhurst had stated in the address he had delivered at the Convocation of the Bombay University:

"The development of the intellect without the strengthening of the character is more dangerous than ignorance itself."

In his own view:

"Every man has his duty to perform—a mission in life to accomplish. If he fails to discharge his duty honestly and well he lays himself open to blame; if he tries to do it as best he can, he can claim no credit for it. For the loyal performance of an obligation promises no other reward than the satisfaction the doer finds in performing it to the best of his power and intentions."

The ideal he thus set forth conforms to the *nishkam dharma*—work for work's sake and not for

the sake of its fruits—laid down by Shree Krishna, from whom he traces his descent.

The Thakore Sahib's British friends shared Lord Sandhurst's enthusiasm in respect of the College. Lord Northbrook, who had left India in 1876 after completing his term as Viceroy, was so pleased that, on reading the newspaper report of the formal opening, he wrote:

"It is not only a munificent act of Your Highness, but it must have the best effect upon a very important class. If I may be permitted to assist in a very humble way in so excellent an undertaking, perhaps you will accept the enclosed cheque and have it spent in providing a gold medal to be awarded annually in such a manner as may be most useful."

It was decided to award the Northbrook Medal to the student standing the highest in the Experimental Science examination.

11

A few months later His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda was persuaded to tarry at Gondal on his way from his dominions in Kathiawar to Baroda and preside at the prize giving ceremony at the College on February 1, 1899. Famine was fastening its grips on Kathiawar, as we shall see in the succeeding chapter; and His Highness had gone to Amreli personally to appraise the situation and to see to it that arrangements for affording relief to the sufferers was commensurate with the needs.

The Thakore Sahib prominently referred to this fact in the speech he delivered. He said:

"We know it is not a holiday trip that has brought you to this historic province. It is only the gravity of the situation combined with an

anxious desire to provide in this time of distress relief for your outlying districts in Kathiawar that brings you in our midst."

He told the Maharaja Gaekwar that the numbers in which *Grania* boys were taking advantage of the institution had greatly exceeded his expectations. He felt sure that it would be necessary to enlarge the boarding accommodation at no distant date.

The Maharaja Gaekwar congratulated the Gondalis on having so progressive a Ruler. He (the Thakore Sahib of Gondal) had "paid great attention to the improvement of means of communication by the construction of roads, trams and railways; and to the organization of courts of civil justice and the sanitary and medical needs of his subjects by the foundation of municipalities, the opening of public parks and grounds of recreation and also by his efforts to improve the drinking water for the city."

The enlightened Ruler of Baroda added:

"Whenever in future any able and impartial historian happens to write an account of the Native States he would find plenty of material to show how the different States, with the limited means at their disposal and with the men and civilization of society they could command, had striven to carry on the cause of progress and reform as understood in the closing years of the 19th century. He would be struck with the immense sacrifices the Native Chiefs have made of their inherited notions and deep-rooted and fondly cherished interests and prejudices to subserve the cause of reform. Considering the circumstances it strikes me that the strides made in the cause of good government in many of the States during the last few years have been gigantic and rapid. I do not say that all that is possible for them

has been achieved, yet a great deal has been done, for which they naturally feel just exultation."

His Highness made a pointed reference to the experiment in compulsory education that he had recently started in Amreli. "I have always taken deep interest in the spread of education amongst all our classes," he remarked, "and not far from here I have made an attempt in starting even compulsory education, the progress of which, I think, deserves close attention and scrutiny." His object in referring to this endeavour was, he noted, "to declare that Your Highness could not have chosen a more pleasant task for me to perform than to ask me to preside at the annual prize-distribution at this College." In memory of his visit he founded a scholarship of Rs.20 *per mensem* to be awarded to a worthy student of the College.

12

Some 14 months later control over education in Gondal was transferred to the Thakore Sahib, who, at the time, was striving to stay the sinister spectre of starvation that was stalking the State. The arrangements that he nevertheless made to improve general educational facilities will be dealt with in another chapter.

The Grasia College, in the meantime, continued to flourish. All the distinguished personages who visited the capital from time to time were shown over the institution and spoke in flattering terms of the management. His Highness Shree Bhavsinhjee, the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, founded, in 1907, a scholarship of Rs.20 *per mensem* to be awarded to the graduate of the College who, after passing the Previous Examination of the Bombay University, joined the Agricultural College at Poona.

In a letter written from Ganeshkind, near Poona, dated August 9, 1908, Sir George Clarke (later Lord Sydenham), then Governor of Bombay, expressed his pleasure at the provision for education in botany and agriculture made at this time in the College curriculum. He hoped "that, in time, the knowledge so acquired will prove very useful to the State." The educational system seemed "to be thoroughly well organized and soundly administered. He commended the abolition of servants and retinue at the Grasia College.

The Thakore Sahib of Limbdi visited the institution in 1912. His eldest son, the Yuvaraja Digvijaya Sinhjee had been a student of the Grasia College some time earlier. Some of his other kinsmen also had been or were at the time receiving education there. The scholarship that he founded showed his appreciation in a practical manner and was highly acclaimed by his clansmen and the Thakore Sahib.

CHAPTER XVII

Trying Times

1

As stated in the preceding chapter, Their Highnesses went to Britain at this time to place Bhojrajji at Fton.

The Yuvaraja was then in his fourteenth year, and showed considerable promise, being, to quote the Head Master of the school he had till then been attending in Scotland, "straight-forward and honourable and always pleasant to deal with and wishful to please."

At the Eton entrance test he had taken a good place for his age. He had evidently inherited his father's studious habits and his Head Master declared that he could, "if he chose, be a good scholar" and was "thoroughly intelligent in everything he did." His parents were well pleased with his progress and left him at Eton, certain that he would give a good account of himself there—an expectation that was fulfilled.

Anxiety in regard to Bakunverba's health took Their Highnesses to Britain again in 1897. Their visit coincided with the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, held on June 21st of that year. The Rajas of Kathiawar, wishing to be represented

at that function, appointed His Highness as their delegate.

The ceremonies and fêtes held in connection with the Queen's Jubilee were resplendent affairs. Her reign had proved to be prosperous as well as long. Her concern for her subjects in all parts of the Empire touched their hearts. Loyalty poured forth spontaneously as she entered the sixty-first year of her regnal career.

As a token of her esteem Her Majesty conferred upon Bhagvat Sinhjee the high Order of Grand Commander of the Indian Empire. She invested him with the Insignia at Balmoral, in the presence of the Duke of Connaught and the Princess Henry of Battenberg. Once more he was deeply touched by her solicitude. As he wrote to Mr. Ganpatram Trevedi, Honorary Secretary of the Lang Library at Rajkot, who, on behalf of the Committee of the Library, had felicitated him on his receiving this honour:

"Her Majesty's motherly affection for her numerous subjects and especially for the Indian people is well known. If I were to describe her character in one word I would say that she is kindness itself."

During his stay in Britain in 1897 His Highness paid a visit to Glasgow and was shown over the City Chambers on September 24th. He also visited several industrial centres.

4

Their Highnesses returned to Gondal on December 6th. As the engine conveying their saloon to the siding recently built in the "Huzur Bungalow" compound steamed in, they received a rousing welcome from the officials, merchants, professors and students of the Grasia College and others who had gathered there

to greet them. On alighting from their saloon they were presented with an address of welcome. It was felicitously worded. It stated that His Highness' departure had caused them "a simultaneous feeling of joy and sorrow." They had been much gratified that their Ruler proceeded to Europe to be present on the occasion of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. At the same time they regretted that his departure was due to the illness of Kunvari Shree Bakunverba, far from her home and loved ones. Their feelings were now however changed to perfect joy. Bakunverba had been restored to health and the Thakore Sahib had been decorated with a new Insignia of a high Order. They eulogized him for redressing their grievances and furthering their welfare and expressed a feeling of thankfulness for the care and kindness vouchsafed them by Mr. Bezouji during his absence abroad.

His Highness, in reply, reiterated his ideal that the true satisfaction of a ruler rested entirely upon the loyalty and goodwill of his subjects. He assured them that Bakunverba was progressing slowly but steadily and he hoped she would quite recover under expert medical advice. He thanked them for their congratulations for the honour recently conferred upon him. He assured them that the compliment given by them to the Diwan's ability and career was well deserved; and declared that he did not wish to share the praise, which exclusively belonged to Mr. Bezouji. He was thankful to them for their kind wishes and joined with them in the hope that he should be able to promote their welfare still further.

Early in 1898 a cablegram was received that caused great concern to every one in the "Huzur Bungalow." It announced that the physicians in attendance upon Bakunverba reluctantly considered it

imperative to operate upon her neck for the second time.

Their Highnesses hurried to her bedside as fast as the then existing means of communication could take them. Shortly after their arrival in Edinburgh an eminent surgeon successfully performed the operation.

Before she had entirely recovered her strength a telegram was received that cast gloom over the family. Scarcity was deepening into famine in Gondal. His Highness telegraphed to the Diwan to start test relief works; and took the first available steamer back home.

3

Never before in living memory had there been such a catastrophe. Crops were almost a complete failure; and stocks of grain had been largely depleted. Starvation stared the people in the face. The fate of the cattle was even worse. Hillside and plain alike were barren and browned. Heavy inroads had already been made in the straw stacks.

The failure of crops seriously affected the industries dependent upon them for raw materials. Hundreds of persons not directly engaged in agriculture were thrown out of employment.

His Highness remitted one-fourth of the *vigholi* (land revenue); suspended one-half; and ordered the Revenue Department to moderate its zeal in collecting even the remaining one-fourth. Wherever necessary complete exemption was granted.

The Revenue Department was ordered, at the same time, to make *lagavi* (loans) without interest, to enable the farmers to sink wells and effect other improvements that, in addition to seeing them through the famine, would be of use to them in future. The terms of repayment were to be extremely easy. Subsequently the unrecovered sums were written off in

instances in which hardship would be involved in repaying them.

Further assistance was rendered by throwing open to the village cattle *Darbari vilis* (grass land reserved for grazing by the State). The farmers were shown how to utilize prickly pear as fodder; but did not take kindly to that innovation.

Grass was imported; but the amount that could be brought in was insufficient and poor in quality. The people were advised to grow lucerne and *bajri* (small millet) which enabled them to overcome the worst of their troubles.

Money was advanced to the landlords (*Bhayats, Mulgrasias, Grasias, Jicabdaras, etc.*) or alternatively the repayment of loans obtained by them from money-lenders was guaranteed.

State servants receiving under Rs.16 a month were given extra compensation to buy grain. All officials including the mounted Police, who had to maintain horses, were granted a special fodder allowance. An additional sum was paid to village servants.

4

A large relief scheme had, in the meantime, been framed to provide work for persons who found themselves stranded. Two years earlier His Highness had asked an eminent consulting engineer to examine all possible sites for waterworks in the vicinity of Gondal. He had submitted a report in 1897, estimating that the project he recommended would cost Rs.3,00,000.

The necessity for providing relief works for famine sufferers gave the Thakore Sahib the opportunity to put this scheme into immediate operation. The work was undertaken by the State Engineer, Mr. Balabhai Gulabchand.

Known as the "Veri Lake" project, it was designed with an eye to future utility.

A masonry dam 800 feet in length was to be thrown across the Gondli river about two and a half miles north of the capital for impounding the waters of that river and its affluents for a double purpose:

(1) potable water was to be supplied to the inhabitants of Gondal by means of pipes; and

(2) water to be used for irrigation.

At the back of his brain he had also a third purpose. He meant to turn the lake-side into a plaisance to which people could walk or drive in the morning or the evening and find rest and recreation in quiet, beautiful surroundings.

The catchment area of the lake was nearly 88 square miles. As originally designed the water-spread was to be one and one-sixteenth square miles and the storage capacity—30 feet above the bed of the river—was to be 2,40,00,000 cubic feet. A water-supply sufficient for two years, despite exceptionally bad seasons, would be ensured for the town and there would be enough left to irrigate 2,300 acres of land. The project, though designed as a relief measure, would yield nearly four per cent. on the capital outlay of Rs. 3,00,000.

Not all the persons needing assistance could, unfortunately, be employed on this or any other project. In his tours of inspection His Highness had noticed that shortage of food had weakened some persons past all physical exertion for the time being. He therefore gave strict orders to the officials to exercise great caution in exacting work from famine sufferers. Those stricken by infirmity or incapacitated by some other disability were to be given gratuitous relief.

5

The Thakore Sahib took great trouble to work out the details in connection with these measures. The instructions issued over his own signature on March 17, 1900 to the police *patels* left nothing of a vital nature to the imagination of these petty, but in their own way powerful, officials.

Each police *patel* was charged with responsibility for the life and welfare of the people in his particular area. He was not to leave his post without prior permission from his superior officer (the *faujdar*).

The *patel* was told not to trust to hearsay information, not to wait even to be appealed to for assistance. He must personally visit, each day, every house occupied by persons of the non-cultivator classes, such as dheds, bhangis, shepherds, kolis, sindhis and the like and satisfy himself as to their real condition.

If, in the course of the daily inspection, he found that any one was unable to maintain himself, such person was to be sent with a note to the State Engineer at Gondal who would give him work. Explicit provision was made to ensure the well-being of expectant mothers.

Persons owing allegiance to other Rulers found loitering in villages, were to be sent to the State Engineer, if they were able to work. If destitute they were to be given an allowance for the journey as if they were Gondal subjects and arrangements were to be made to send them to their own homes. The expense incurred was to be recovered, if possible, from their respective States.

All food or payment in cash was to be distributed by the *patel* in the presence of two respectable men of the village whose names must be entered in the *modi's* ledger.

Not only were food and clothing or, in the case of the able-bodied, money wherewith to buy them provided, but elaborate arrangements were made for looking after the physical welfare of the people. As under-nourishment was sure to impair health, especially in the case of children, the medical staff was ordered to engage in an intensive effort both on the preventive and curative sides.

6

Care was taken to provide adequate sanitary arrangements in connection with the Camp. A dispensary was attached to it and placed in charge of a hospital assistant working under the direct supervision of the Chief Medical Officer of the State.

An average of 97 patients a day attended. There were only 35 deaths throughout the first year—from diarrhoeas, fever and bronchitis. This was regarded as a wonderful record in view of the fact that hundreds of men, women and children had been brought together and were living in conditions to which they were quite unaccustomed.

Special consideration was shown for respectable men and women (some of them *Grasias*) who happened to be needy at this time. Care was taken not to injure their susceptibilities by forcing them to mix with persons whom they considered their inferiors, or by setting them to do work which they regarded as degrading. Many of them would otherwise have preferred to starve in silence rather than submit to what they considered social indignity.

The "task work system" was adopted. The labour exacted from an individual was in proportion to his or her strength. As far as possible artisans were given the sort of work they customarily performed and were not made to engage in jobs they looked

upon as "heavy" or "dirty." One day of rest in seven was given to all workers—usually the one on which they received their week's wages.

A kitchen was opened for the children of the workers in the Camp. Half a pound of milk was issued to each infant every day. They were also provided with clothing. To protect them from exposure to the sun, to keep them out of mischief and at the same time to afford them an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of education, two temporary schools—one for boys and one for girls—were conducted at the Camp. On an average, 564 children under eight years of age were cared for.

7

A Poor-House was established for the aged and the infirm, the blind and the crippled, indigent pregnant women, orphans and children deserted by their parents. A whole-time officer, with an adequate staff, attended to the needs of the inmates, usually 900 persons, and maintained discipline among them.

The lines recently completed for the police were commandeered for this purpose. The accommodation was soon found to be inadequate and several sheds had to be erected.

A hospital and dispensary, well equipped and staffed for indoor and outdoor patients, was established in connection with the Poor-House.

A lying-in ward was attached to the hospital. The expectant mothers were given free diet specially prepared for them, for two months before and three weeks after delivery. Trained attendants looked after them during this period.

A Famine Officer with two Circle Inspectors under him travelled constantly about the districts to see that the village officials carried out the Ruler's

instructions faithfully and humanely. They checked the registers and reported any frauds they detected.

8

Throughout the famine the Thakore Sahib was constantly on the alert, visiting the Camp and the Poor-House regularly to ensure that all was going well. The Rani Sahiba never let a day pass without going to both places and carefully inspecting them. These visits put heart into the people and kept them from becoming hopeless.

His Highness dipped into his private purse, to provide additional medical comforts and clothing for the inmates of the Poor-House and for non-working children. Her Highness donated Rs. 500 to supply milk to the babies; contributed Rs. 500 to the Gondal and Rs. 700 to the Dhoraji Mahajan Vada for providing grass for *penjarapols* cattle; and also gave food from her kitchen to many destitute persons.

Bai Shree Bonjiba, widow of Rajkumar Prithiraj, subscribed Rs. 300 to the Gondal Mahajan Vada and Rs. 500 to the Dhoraji Mahajan Vada funds. She also maintained a *radavrat* (free kitchen) and distributed grain to poor but respectable families who would have died rather than accept charity in public.

This good lady passed away on April 18, 1901, before the famine had entirely loosed its grip upon the State. She bestowed her charity quietly—almost by stealth—so much did she shrink from publicity.

Even in ordinary times her purse-strings were always untied. She was a great believer in education and had endowed the Monghiba Girls' School at Gondal with liberal scholarships. All the inmates of the Bai Sahib Ba Asylum and Orphanage were feasted at her expense on certain days of the year.

9

Sheth Adamji Pirbhoy of Bombay—a native of Dhoraji—fed daily, at the town of his birth, thousands of persons without distinction of caste or creed and provided them with clothing. He supplied grain quietly to respectable families who were unable to secure means of support during this time of trial. He also maintained a Poor-House and Dispensary and sent *doolies* and stretchers to bring cripples and disabled persons into his relief shed; and a lying-in ward where he liberally provided comforts to famine-stricken expectant mothers before, during and after confinement.

Sheth Popat Motichand, Khanu Mesa and other public-spirited, wealthy persons, contributed generously towards relief for Dhoraji citizens. The *mahajans* (merchants) of that city collected Rs.20,000 for this purpose and borrowed Rs.15,000 from the State (which refused to charge interest), to give cooked food to the poor and to care for a large number of cattle in the *panjarapole*.

The Anjuman-i-Islam of Dhoraji established a shop from which grain was sold to all, without discrimination, at prices appreciably below the rate ruling in the market. They also distributed grain and money among poor Muslims.

The well-to-do classes of Upleta, Bhayavadar and Sarsai contributed according to their means to the relief of the sufferers. Persons too poor to give went from door to door collecting provisions and food to be passed on to the needy.

10

Famine conditions created problems for the police. The influx of starving "foreigners" was accompanied by robbery, house-breaking and petty thefts of field produce. To cope with the increased crime it was

necessary to rescind the order disbanding 110 temporary constables and to recruit 100 new men for the police force.

When the Indian world outside Gondal learnt of Bhagvat Sinhjee's noble efforts to lessen the toll of famine in his State, the press rang with praise of his achievement. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta) called prominent attention to the statement contained in the famine report: "Happily no death from starvation has taken place in the whole State," and commented:

"How we wish our own Government would close its famine report with the above proud remark! In short the Gondal State spent every pice of its revenue for the protection of lives. The choicest blessings of God will, no doubt, be showered upon His Highness the Thakore Sahib of Gondal, for his noble and successful efforts in saving the lives of his subjects."

In the course of a long, descriptive article, the *Hindu* (Madras) wrote:

"An advanced and enlightened Prince like the Thakore Sahib can easily raise himself to the proper level of the gravity of a peculiar situation, and with an earnest solicitude to provide for his subjects at a time of distress, the necessary means were not far to seek and no time was lost in employing them to the greatest advantage to save life and suffering."

Praise of His Highness' accomplishment did not emanate only from the Indian-owned and Indian-edited papers. The *Times of India* (Bombay) was unstinting in showering encomiums upon him. It went even to the length of hinting that, under the present régime, a "worse fate might befall the Province than for the whole of Kathiawar to be bought up by Gondal."

11

Of the reforms made while the State was in the grip of famine, attention needs to be drawn to the one relating to the standardization of weights and measures. The sky-high prices charged for the barest necessities of life brought home to the authorities the fact that lack of uniformity in weights and measures made it easy for dishonest shopkeepers to cheat their customers. Judges found it difficult to decide complaints since no one had laid down a standard to which they could compel merchants to approximate.

His Highness issued a notification directing "all merchants, traders, shopkeepers and general dealers in the State, to adopt such weights and measures as are stamped with the State Seal,"—none other being recognized as legal standard. The weights and measures authorized by the State for use were manufactured in the Gondal Metal Foundry, where they were procurable at a price slightly above cost.

The Thakore Sahib abolished, during this time of stress, two imposts: (1) *Pujan-Vero*, levied from carders; and (2) *Ghoda-Chara* (fee for horse-grazing), realized from certain villages.

12

It was very fortunate for Gondal that His Highness was not over sanguine by nature. While others were congratulating him because the State had suffered so little in view of the severity of the storm that it had just weathered, he was apprehensive that distress might follow in the wake of the famine. Sure enough, there was a tremendous downpour of rain. The capital and a number of villages were flooded.

Houses, furniture, cattle—in some cases whole hamlets—were swept away by the raging waters that came surging through the channels of the suddenly

inundated rivers and rivulets. In one or two places the police *chowkies* and records were completely submerged.

When the water receded the scene was harrowing. The streets and even the grounds surrounding private houses were taken possession of by the people who had been rendered homeless. Most of them had escaped only with their lives and possessed nothing but the rags on their backs. In some cases mothers deserted their helpless little ones.

With great difficulty the police collected the flood-sufferers in vacant buildings and *dharmshalas* (inns). Cholera however broke out among them and they quickly dispersed in all directions, spreading the disease as they fled. There was at the same time an outbreak of a very virulent type of malarial fever.

During this year of pestilence the State physicians treated 14,648 cases of "fever," nearly three times as many as had come under their attention the preceding year; and 2,229 cases of cholera. Many patients were brought to them too late to be saved. Many others could not, or were unwilling to avail themselves of the facilities provided for treatment and died.

The abnormal conditions were reflected in the vital statistics. The birth-rate was 28.8 per 1,000 of population against 51.2 in the preceding year. The death-rate was 168.56 per 1,000 instead of 40.1.

In a normal year the deaths averaged 5,459, while during this abnormal year they were five times that number, or 27,541. Nearly two-thirds of the mortality was ascribed to malarial fever and one-fifth to cholera.

Another famine followed the flood. As if the Fates had not worked sufficient havoc, rats appeared

upon the scene and damaged the crops and locusts swarmed over the country, destroying what little remained of them.

Then there was drought, spelling ruin to the *kharif* (autumn) crop. Wheat was totally destroyed—cotton was scanty.

Next season the rainfall was only about seven inches. The total yield did not average more than "three annas in the rupee"—only a little more than in the famine year.

Because of Bhagvat Sinhjee's forethought, the depression was not as general as it might have been. The increase in the number of wells as the result of the relief work carried on during the famine had given a marked stimulus to *rabi* (spring) cultivation.

All this notwithstanding, His Highness realized that a "three-anna crop," following a year that had been lean which itself had succeeded a year of unparalleled famine, was certain to result in wide-spread and intense scarcity. He therefore made preparations to give assistance to his harrassed people.

The farmers were told that half the revenue for the current year was foregone and that half of the remaining 50 per cent. they could pay at their own convenience.

The Treasury suffered. It received only Rs.2,00,000 instead of Rs.8,00,000. But the Ruler's self-abnegation inspired the people with hope. They plucked up courage to carry on the fight with scarcity until better days dawned.

An advance of Rs.30,000 was sanctioned for the purchase of Broach cotton-seed and Rs.80,000 for food-grains to be given to cultivators by way of *tagavi*. Money was lent them to enable them to improve the water-supply and to purchase appliances for irrigation.

The water cess chargeable on *orias* used for producing irrigated crops was remitted.

14

To afford relief to the needy an irrigation project was taken in hand at Paneli. The scope of the scheme was large enough to provide employment for 8,000 labourers for eight or ten months. Only a quarter of that number actually took advantage of the work.

A *bund* was thrown across the river Fulzar, holding up a head of 52 feet of water and forming a lake with a storage capacity of 59,10,00,000 cubic feet. It had a catchment area of 45 square miles. Since the rainfall of that district averaged 25 inches *per annum*, it was considered that ample margin would be left for dry years.

A large shed was erected near the site for sheltering the workers. A kitchen was opened in conjunction with it to provide food for the non-working children of the labourers. The youngsters were clothed and otherwise cared for gratuitously.

A Poor-House, situated near the Relief-Works, was open to all who were physically unfit to earn a livelihood. Her Highness the Rani Sahiba maintained a similar institution at Gondal from her private purse.

15

Feeling that the need existed for an orphanage even in ordinary times, Her Highness decided to make it permanent. His Highness the Thakore Sahib laid the foundation-stone in October, 1902.

The rainfall during 1903 was normal, but Gondal had not yet seen the last of its troubles. Swarms of locusts settled down on the fields and caused damage amounting to Rs. 50,000. The late crops—wheat, gram,

sugar-cane and cotton—were blighted by frost, causing a loss of another Rs. 2,50,000. Untimely rain, falling at the end of February and the beginning of March, spoiled the prospects for the next season. Subsidiary works in connection with the Veri and Paneli lakes continued to provide relief to all who applied for it until they were completed in the beginning of 1904.

16

In reviewing the relief work done during these trying times, it is interesting to note that the cost incurred upon combating calamities totalled nearly Rs. 12,00,000.

Unlike other States, Gondal was able to draw from its reserves all the money needed for extraordinary expenditure. It was, in addition, able to make loans to needy neighbours.

The bulk of the money spent permanently enriched the State, because the Ruler had had the forethought to order, in the very beginning,

- (1) that assistance be given in a manner that would prevent the demoralization of the recipients; and
- (2) that the expenditure as far as possible, be so directed as to be of enduring benefit to the State.

Mention has been made of the two water works that were built, one near Gondal and the other near Moti Paneli. With the loans granted by the State farmers sank hundreds of wells. Progress in this respect during the Thakore Sahib's reign has been prodigious, as will appear from a subsequent chapter.

17

Nor was money stinted in providing protection against floods, since the State, in common with the rest of Kathiawar, was subject to inundations from rivers that rose in no time to a very high level.

These works were, generally speaking, given a form to serve other purposes as well, such as irrigation projects, provision of drinking water, the construction of retaining walls, increase in the height of existing *bunds*, the widening of culverts and bridges and drainage schemes. The smaller works were converted into *ghat*—a never-ending source of benefit and delight to villagers. *Bunds* were turned into roads. The reclaimed land was used for building sites.

No village was too small or too remote to receive attention in this respect. It is claimed that in consequence Gondal is better able to bear the shock of famine, drought or flood than any other part of India.

The outlay upon the flood works in the capital, Dhoraji and Upleta has been particularly heavy. They have however helped to beautify the towns.

Gondal, for instance, has been provided with a beautiful promenade along the Gondli. It consists of a bank carrying a 30-foot road, with foot-paths ten feet wide. It is lined with a retaining wall three-quarters of a mile in length and about 20 feet high, originally constructed to protect the Samapura area from floods. Stone seats and *surukhas* (projected seats) have been provided along the wall for the comfort of the citizens.

The bridge thrown across the river consists of 30 segmented arches of 10-foot span, with large piers at the end of every three arches. It has been so designed that after the monsoon silt has been carried off, the water can be stored up to 13 feet—the height of the springing in the centre of the bed of the river. When rainfall is normal, the river presents a sight particularly refreshing during the summer.

The whole town has been provided with a storm-water drainage system by means of which a large

extent of land has been reclaimed while at the same time street flooding has been stopped.

At Dhoraji the Sufra has been diverted. Tunnel culverts have been built over various *nallahs*. Strong retaining walls and a storm-water drain some three-quarters of a mile long have been constructed. By diverting a branch of the river Rupawati, territory five and a half miles in extent has been saved from the menace of excess rain-water. When all the works now in hand have been completed, Rs. 20,00,000 will have been spent to protect the people of to-day and to-morrow from flood havoc.



CHAPTER XVIII

A Rani's ideas

1

The diary Her Highness kept while travelling in Europe, North America, the Far East, Australia and Ceylon, showed that she had not been content merely with seeing the sights, but had visited educational, social and religious institutions and even industrial and commercial concerns; and everywhere had tried to burrow beneath the surface into the reality of things. She had availed herself of opportunities to become acquainted with the people in the old as well as the new world.

In the opinion of persons competent to judge Gujarati, her style was simple, instructive and racy. The book read as if the author were having a heart-to-heart talk with the reader.

The information about places of interest she supplied was immediately welcomed. It was not easily available, at that time, to persons who knew no language other than Gujarati. Descriptive matter in the Indian Languages continues to be scarce indeed to this day—more than three decades later.

The book bore evidence that its author had an eye for beauty. Like her husband, she was charmed with the Scottish lakes. She was struck with the

grandeur of the Alps. The art treasures of Italy moved her profoundly.

2

Shree Nandkunverba's comments on men and matters were frank and courageous. The English, she wrote, had used their splendid qualities for exploiting other countries. They possessed the necessary qualities to accomplish this purpose—"firmness, courage, energy, power of organization, spirit of rivalry"—and were much superior to Indians in these respects. They had however the "faults of their qualities"—as the French say—"pride of race, aloofness, selfishness, and violence." They were adventurous, industrious and courageous, but rather reserved and taciturn, proud and selfish.

Love for material things and physical comforts had, she added, impelled the English to subjugate others. Their wants, were much greater than those of Indians and to satisfy them they brought other people under their sway.

She did not like the English passion for hunting and killing animals. She appears to have been even more shocked at this than her husband had been during his first tour.

Nor did she approve of the "new woman" who was just then coming to the fore in Britain. "By pursuing manly games," she wrote, women acquired "a sort of masculine spirit" that ill became them. As it was not desirable that men should try to poach upon women's preserves, she thought it was not right "that women should begin to interfere...in men's work."

Scotsmen, in her estimation, were brave, frugal and gifted with literary taste. In their valour, love of their country and love of honour, they reminded her of the Rajputs from whom she was sprung. Brave

themselves, they appreciated bravery in others. They were frugal—a quality she much admired.

Like India, Scotland had often been invaded by foreigners and had passed through many and varied vicissitudes. It had produced not only heroes but great statesmen and had given England Cabinet Ministers and India Governors and Governors-General.

The Irish impressed her as being hospitable like the Kathiawaris. Cheerful and ready-witted, they were inclined to be hasty and easily excitable.

She especially felt sympathetic towards the Irish. Like Indians, they were very poor, engaged largely in agriculture (not so profitable as manufacturing industry) and often suffered from famine.

Frenchmen were, she thought, tidy, polite, smooth-tongued, proud, excitable, luxury-loving and artistic. Being mercurial in temperament, they could not be relied upon. She chided them for their vanity and indolence. Though they possessed the artistic impulse and had a scientific bent of mind, and some of their learned men had been among the most celebrated in Europe, they had not, on the whole, devoted themselves to cultivating learning. Their thoughts were mainly taken up with the good things of life—eating, drinking, dressing and decorating themselves. Ease and pleasure were to them as the breath of their nostrils. The women worked in the field, factory or shop, while the men lounged in arm-chairs in cafés.

Germans, she considered, were brave, just and fair in their dealings: but were ponderous and harsh martinets. Education was at its best in Germany. Norwegians were good and frugal; Swedes dull but capable of becoming learned; Danes peace-loving and strong but not adventurous as their ancestors had been; and the Dutch hard and persistent.

The Rani Sahiba was particularly interested in Russia. Its polity seemed to her to be based upon foundations similar to those upon which government had rested in ancient India, where, too, all power had been concentrated in the King's hands, though his ministers and the learned men at his court exerted some influence over him and could remove him if he persisted in being vicious despite all warnings administered to him.

She discovered that trade and industry were conducted in Russia much as they were in India. In the Tsar's dominions, for example, as in her home land, fairs were held periodically at various places to which traders journeyed from near and distant points and sold their wares.

The Russians were, she observed, very superstitious and wanting in cleanliness. Unlike Indians, they did not place a high value on learning. Many of them suffered from leprosy. In the estimation of some persons, she wrote, that disease was caused by the long fasts that they kept so often. She questioned the accuracy of this explanation. In India, too, people fasted, but did not become leprous thereby.

She thought highly of Russian hospitality. The Slavs seemed to her to be as generous as the people of Kathiawar.

Her estimate of western and southern Europeans was equally frank. Spaniards and Portuguese were lazy, supercilious and dirty. The Swiss were simple and patriotic. Italians were fine looking and skilful but untidy and indolent (this statement was recorded long before Signor Mussolini's day). Turks were hospitable, devoted to Islam but idle and ignorant. Americans struck the Rani Sahiba as being industrious, frugal, lovers of liberty, but inclined to be haughty. Chinese were very hard-working and skilful, but did

not appear to her to be cleanly in their personal habits. She liked the Japanese. They were clean, active and enterprising. Australians were brave but uncivil and overconscious of their own ability.

3

Critics welcomed the volume. As the *Hindu* (Madras) pointed out, it was "full of things which evinced both discrimination and good taste."

Writers in the Bombay Presidency who read her book in the original particularly praised it. The *Kathiawar Times* (Rajkot) called attention to the fact that the Rani had roamed over a much wider field than "any other traveller who had come forward from amongst the Gujaratis to write an account. It found Her Highness' style "terse, racy and charming" and the language "simple, unostentatious and easy." It proceeded:

"It is a production, the first and best of its kind, by a female author and as such will remain a monument of the industry, ability and learning of a woman who, having laid aside the luxurious and indolent habits of the members of her class, has so prudently embodied the fruits of her observations and reflections in so tangible and valuable a shape. The book would do credit even to the tried pen of a writer of the masculine sex.

The *Times of India* (Bombay) reviewer told his readers:

"The Gondal State seems to be in an enviable position in this respect, as both its Maharaja and Maharani are enlightened personages, who have had the courage to pierce through time-worn prejudices and traditions and the good sense to march abreast of the times."

4

While foreign travel broadened the Rani Sahiba's intellectual outlook, it did not disturb her religious beliefs. The more, in fact, she saw of other people and studied their philosophy and ethics, the more regard she had for the system in which she had been brought up. While willing and even happy to give up the meaningless conventions that had fastened themselves to Hinduism like barnacles to a ship's bottom she held fast to the essentials of the pristine faith.

She had, for instance, discarded *pardah* ten years earlier. As an almost necessary corollary she gave up the prejudices regarding the persons with whom she might and might not break bread.

In 1903 the Rani Sahiba performed the ceremony known as *Laksha Chandi*. Brahmans flocked to Gondal from near and far to take part in it, were hospitably received, lodged and fed at Her Highness' expense; and engaged in performing *havana* (sacrifices) before the sacred fire, to the accompaniment of Vedic chants. They were given *dakshina* (presents of money) according to their respective duties and feasted in honour of the auspicious occasion.

CHAPTER XIX

Lever of uplift

On March 31, 1900, the arrangement by which nearly all the educational institutions in the State were managed from Rajkot was ended. But for the acute distress prevailing at the moment, the joy inspired by the extinction of that anomaly would have found public expression.

The menace of famine had virtually emptied the schools. It was of little use to hold classes in the villages when the spectre of starvation was holding out clutching hands to snatch at the young and the old.

Though during the period it had exercised control over institutions in Gondal, the "Educational Department" at Rajkot had by no means been idle, the system as it was handed over to Bhagvat Sinhjee was utterly inadequate to the needs of the children then growing up in Gondal. There were only 30 schools to be transferred. The pupils attending them totalled 2,500 of whom no more than 332 were girls. Barely 1·2 per cent. of the schoolable boys and ·1 per cent. of the schoolable girls were receiving instruction.

No one who knew the conditions then existing in Gondal could blame the people for this deplorable

state of affairs. The poor attendance was primarily due to the non-existence of schools within easy walking distance of the children's homes.

Hardly any attempt had been made to supply facilities for higher education. The authorities at Rajkot maintained only one institution in the State which they listed as "secondary." Known as the "Middle School," it was situated at Gondal and was attended by 175 pupils who were taught elementary English along with Gujarati. Any where else in the world it would have been deemed a "primary" school.

As to the quality of instruction, the less said the better. Few teachers outside Gondal and Dhoraji had received any training for their work.

Schoolmasters, particularly in the villages, were poorly paid. The total amount spent upon the salaries of teachers employed in the State by the Educational Department at Rajkot did not exceed Rs.10,000 during the year the transfer was made.

How could any one expect these men to be conversant with pedagogic methods then regarded as modern, or even to put their hearts into their work? They did little more than to attempt to ram knowledge of the three R's down the pupils' throats.

The Thakore Sahib was nevertheless happy to have this establishment handed over to him. Sixteen years after he had come into power he had at last the opportunity of using education as a lever to uplift his people.

In the midst of his fight with the ogre of famine, he made arrangements to manage the educational system efficiently and develop it as soon as conditions righted themselves. He obtained the services of a capable educationist—Mr. M. A. Turkhud—and appointed him the State Educational Inspector.

Mr. Turkhud had served for many years as the Vice Principal in the Rajkumar College at Rajkot. Later appointed Inspector of Schools in Kathiawar, he had travelled all over the peninsula and become conversant with educational problems in the various States. He therefore was just the man for the post.

Placing a capable deputy at his disposal, the Thakore Sahib set Mr. Turkhud to work to prepare a programme for extending and improving educational facilities in Gondal. He showed his keen interest by making himself accessible to the newly appointed officer whenever any matter needed to be thrashed out *viva voce*; and giving immediate attention to any papers he sent up for orders.

The Educational Inspector found, as the Principal of the Grasia College had discovered several years earlier, that Bhagvat Sinhjee had too acute a mind merely to acquiesce in the proposals submitted to him—that he had pondered the educational problems, had come to very definite conclusions in regard to them and could often detect flaws and suggest improvements in schemes drawn up by men who had made education their lifelong study.

The Thakore Sahib, moreover, knew every inch of the State and every class of the people. He could recognize thousands of his subjects and address many of them by their names. He lavished attention upon any matter that concerned the Gondalis, however petty it might appear to others. Even when proposals believed by their authors to be fully worked out were placed before him, he would have something to say by way of amplification or modification.

It was clear from the outset that the extension of educational facilities in the country-side would take time and money. School-houses would have to be built and equipped and teachers with requisite pedagogic training secured.

There would be little difficulty in supplying the first need. The Public Works Department was capable of carrying out any programme of school construction that the Thakore Sahib might lay down; and despite the inroads made by the famine into the reserves, there would be money to finance that programme.

But to obtain qualified teachers was a different matter. Two institutions, one for training men and the other for women, were, to be sure, conducted at Rajkot through the joint co-operation of the Kathiawar States. As it became apparent not long afterwards however the facilities existing there were utterly inadequate to meet Bhagvat Sinbjee's requirements, once he was able to overcome the ill effects of the famine and could concentrate his energies upon educational development.

So many schools were opened in the villages that had, until the rendition of educational control, been neglected, that within a decade the number of educational institutions was almost doubled. The number of boys and girls attending them increased by more than one hundred per cent. Nor was any time wasted in supplying facilities for secondary education.

On January 1, 1902, a boarding house, named the Bhojrajjee Hostel, after the Yuvaraja, was established in the compound of this school, to lodge 50 boys: but so many applications poured in that 25 more beds had to be immediately provided and the number had to be increased, in 1906 to 110.

The dining hall and reading rooms were large, bright and well ventilated. There was a special dormitory for sick students, who were attended by the State physician.

A large playground was attached and physical training formed an integral part of the curriculum. Two housemasters, working directly under the superin-

tendence of the State Educational Inspector, maintained discipline and looked after the well-being of the boarders. Only men were selected who, it was believed, would win the regard and even the love of the students instead of maintaining discipline with a rod of iron.

The Boarding House interested all visitors to the capital. The Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda was particularly appreciative. In his opinion, everything in regard to the Hostel had been "carefully thought out and efficiently carried out."

Major F. W. Wodehouse, the Political Agent of Halar Prant, visited Gondal in 1904. The "cleanliness of the building and the attention paid to small details" appeared to him to be "most striking." He continued:

"The arrangements for the supply of food and the charges made for boarding show what organization and supervision can do. Mr. Turkhud and his assistants are much to be congratulated on the success of what is entirely a new venture in this Presidency."

Another visitor—Mr. E. Hotson—was equally enthusiastic in regard to this institution. He noted:

"The Hostel is perhaps the most interesting among the many sights of Gondal. Above all the messing arrangements are a triumph of tact and perseverance in meeting obstacles. I do not know of any other place in Bombay at least where so many different castes may be seen dining in one common room off the same fare, which fare by the way was most excellently cooked. The dormitories are perfection in neatness and the health of the boys is naturally under such conditions very good. Mr. Turkhud was kind enough to show us the registers in which the measurements of each boy are entered monthly and those

records show for almost every boy a regular increase in height, weight, chest and muscle. These records should after a few years' more experience have great scientific interest as showing how great an improvement in physique can be effected by constant care and attention to the laws of health. It may be hoped that other educational authorities will visit the Hostel and do their best to copy it."

In 1904 steps were taken to enable girls in the capital to learn English, by opening a class for that purpose in the Monghiba Girls' School. The Thakore Sahib believed that the students would acquire through that medium "a useful training in ideas and principles."

In this school, as in the Grasia College, the method of "direct teaching" was adopted, so that a foreign language would be learnt much as a child acquires its mother tongue. To whet the enthusiasm, a number of scholarships were instituted.

As at the Grasia College, special attention was bestowed upon physical culture. The pupils were taught Indian club drill and *garbas*.

Moral education was assigned an important place in the curriculum. The teachers were instructed to aim at making the girls obedient children, loving sisters and good wives and mothers. To enable them creditably to discharge their housewifely duties in days to come, they were taught mending, plain cutting and sewing, fancy work and embroidery.

His Highness' intention to raise this institution to the status of a high school as soon as he could was realized in 1911 when the Fourth Standard was added. To stimulate effort any student of this school who successfully passed the matriculation examination of the Bombay University was promised a prize of Rs. 500.

The Thakore Sahib had had the foresight to make an advantageous arrangement for university education. In giving a donation to the Fergusson College at Poona he had, it will be remembered, stipulated that Gondalis not exceeding ten in any year should be educated at that College without being charged any tuition or lodging fees.

He made an effort, in 1903, to induce Mr. Jamsetjee N. Tata, the Parsi merchant-prince and patriot, to establish in Gondal the institute he had projected for training Indians in scientific research. A free grant of 300 acres of land, an initial gift of Rs. 5,00,000 and annual grant of Rs. 35,000 were offered for this purpose.

The proposal aroused great interest all over India. Leading articles appeared in newspapers printed in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Allahabad and other towns.

The *Times of India*, while fully appreciating "the public spirit which led His Highness to make such a splendid and quite unexpected bid for the Institute," deprecated "the proposal to locate it at Gondal." Any Kathiawar State was, it declared, "too remote to furnish a suitable environment for such an institution and the climate of the Kathiawar peninsula" was "hardly propitious for scientific investigation."

CHAPTER XX

Wedding Festivities

Just as prosperity began to smile once again upon the State the Yuvaraja bade goodbye to Baliol College, Oxford, which he had entered in October, 1901. His return to Gondal in September 1904, delighted the people.

Some persons had felt apprehensive that so lengthy a sojourn in Europe during the most impressionable years of his life might have estranged the heir to the throne from Indian ways and that upon his return he might find life in Gondal dull. They soon discovered their mistake.

Dada Sahib—elder brother—as every one called him, had acquitted himself creditably at Eton and Oxford: but he had not picked up the luxurious habits of the West. He consequently had no difficulty in fitting himself into the Gondal environment.

The Gondalis were as delighted with his appearance and behaviour as they were with his attainments. His tall figure, manly bearing, courtesy and gentle manners appealed to them and won for him their respect and affection.

Time was not allowed to hang heavily on the Heir-Apparent's hands. He was asked to familiarize himself with State affairs.

With his methodical nature, His Highness mapped out a programme that would enable the Yuvaraja to learn the workings of the various branches of the administration from the inside. He was attached, in turn, to the Revenue, Judicial, Public Works, Education and other Departments and thus became thoroughly familiar with every wheel and cog in the administrative machinery.

Incidentally the Thakore Sahib was able to secure a certain amount of relief from the long strain of the trying times through which Gondal had been passing, by spending a few weeks out of the State. He readily accepted the invitation extended to him by the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Royal Asiatic Society of London to act as their delegate at the centenary celebrations of the Bombay Branch of the latter Society in 1904. In the same year he took part in the deliberations of the Conference convened by the Viceroy and Governor-General to revise the curriculum of the Chiefs' Colleges.

Meanwhile preparations were afoot for celebrating Dada Sahib's wedding. He had been affianced to Shree Rajkunverba, a daughter of Rana Shree Banesinghjee of Vana, in Kathiawar. An unusual circumstance had given this princess special opportunity for acquiring enlightenment. She had spent a part of her girlhood away from the narrow world of Kathiawar in the company of her sister, the accomplished Maharani of Mysore.

In arranging the match the Thakore Sahib put into practice some of the principles of social reform that he held dear. In defiance of the general custom, he had let his son grow to a ripe age before entering the bonds of matrimony. It was, moreover, to be a monogamous marriage—in itself an innovation: for until then ruling families in Kathiawar had taken pride in solemnizing from triple to octuple weddings.

Some of the guests had travelled hundreds of miles to attend the nuptial ceremonies. Among them were many distinguished persons.

The arrival of the Maharaja Gaekwar on January 24 was marked by scenes of splendour in keeping with his exalted position. The railway station and its environs were decorated profusely with flags and festoons. A rich, red carpet was spread on the platform and steps, down to the State carriage. The State band and the pick of the police were on the platform.

The open space outside was packed with carriages and people who had come in great crowds to greet the progressive ruler of Baroda.

The Thakore Sahib, the Diwan and principal State officials and members of the Maharaja Gaekwar's advance party, including Mr. Romesh Chander Dutt, the Revenue Minister of Baroda, Mr. Samarth, the *Sar Suba* (principal revenue official) of the same State, Mr. Vinayak Rao, the *Kamdar* (Master of the Household) and others, awaited His Highness on the platform.

As the special train steamed into the station at nine o'clock in the morning, the band struck up an appropriate tune and a salute of 21 guns bellowed a welcome. He was conducted to the waiting room, which had been specially furnished for the occasion, and there was introduced to local notables and distinguished visitors. He was then escorted to the State carriage, where he sat at the Thakore Sahib's right hand. The dignitaries entered the conveyances allotted to them and proceeded to the "Huzur Bungalow" by way of the Sagramjee High School. The whole route was thronged with crowds eager to get a glimpse of their beloved Ruler and his distinguished guest. Leaving the Maharaja Gaekwar at the "Huzur Bungalow," which had been placed at his

disposal, the Thakore Sahib returned to the Durbargarh, to which he had removed temporarily.

Other personages who had come to Gondal on this occasion were the Thakore Sahib of Chuda; Kumar Sahib Narsinhdevji of Dharampur; the Sheikh Sahib and Begum Sahiba of Mangrol; Raol Shree Dansingjee from Bhavnagar with Mr. Bhupatrai Vithaldas; the father-in-law of His Highness the Jam Sahib of Navanagar with the State Mukhya Wakil, Somchand Karamchand; the Thakore Sahib of Rajkot with his companion, K.S. Vajubha; the Thakore Sahib of Wadhwan deputations from the States of Cutch, Dhrangadhra, Wankaner, Lunawada, Trikangadh, Malia, and Mysore.

The weather had turned severely cold. The temperature dropped so low, in fact, that water froze in pots inside the houses.

The initial ceremonies of Mandaparopan and Ganesh Prayan were performed in the Durbargarh, with great pomp, and splendour. They were attended by the various State guests, the *Bhayats* and *Grasias*, officers and a large number of distinguished residents of the town.

At 7-30 p.m. on January 25 the bridegroom, gorgeously attired, issued from the Durbargarh en route to Kailas Bagh, where the bride was in residence. He was seated on a richly caparisoned horse and was attended by all the *rayasat* of the State. Following him, on foot, came the Thakore Sahib and the distinguished guests, including the Maharaja Gackwar, and officers of the State.

Every inch of space in the streets and buildings along the route was packed to suffocation with men, women and children eager to catch a glimpse of the bridegroom and the guests. The procession took an hour to reach the marriage pavilion.

The ceremony was remarkable for the courageous manner in which *purdah* was dispensed with. In the presence of the great concourse of people the groom and the bride walked round the sacrificial fire and performed the ceremony of *hasta milap* while the *Rajguru* (the royal priest) and his assistants chanted the Vedic hymns that united them in matrimony.

At midnight the Yuvaraja, accompanied by the Yuvarajni, with her face uncovered, arrived at the Durbargarh, in the State carriage drawn by six horses, in the same order in which the bridegroom had gone to the wedding pavilion.

The festivities were brought to a close with the presentation of gifts from the various Rajasthans. They were formally received at a private court held at the Durbargarh. The Thakore Sahib reciprocated by giving *poshaka* (dresses of honour) to his guests.

The next evening the married couple and the Raj Kutumb were entertained at a banquet given by the Maharaja Gackwar, at the Guest Camp.

An influential body of the Thakore Sahib's subjects decided to avail themselves of the presence in Gondal of the Maharaja Gackwar to show their esteem for the Thakore Sahib in a concrete form. Some twelve years earlier the Rajbhakta Sabha had been formed and funds had been collected for a statue of their Ruler. The leaders of the movement had approached him when he was proceeding to Europe on one of his trips and requested him to arrange for it to be executed in Britain. Mr. Birnie Rhind, of Edinburgh was given the commission and had cast a statue in bronze representing His Highness in his academic robes.

A deputation consisting of the principal residents of Gondal, with the municipal President—Mr. Morarji Dharshi—at its head, waited upon the Maharaja Gackwar and requested him to perform the unveiling

ceremony, a request to which he readily acceded. The function took place on January 27.

His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar as is his wont, delivered an interesting and instructive speech in unveiling the statue. He made pointed reference to the handicaps under which the Indian rulers laboured.

Suitable honours were shown to the Maharaja Gaekwar when accompanied by his retinue, he left soon after lunch by special train for Damnagar—a town in Kathiawar named after one of his illustrious ancestors. As it started the band played, the Guard of Honour presented arms and a salute of 21 guns was fired.

To commemorate the marriage of his eldest son the Thakore Sahib granted a number of boons to his subjects. Several old and obnoxious taxes were abolished. Arrears owed by cultivators to the extent of Rs.4,48,132 were remitted. Debts, totalling Rs.1,36,000, due to the State from traders, cultivators and other classes extending over a period of 26 years, were cancelled. Several life-prisoners were pardoned and released. Sweetmeats were distributed to the inmates of all the jails and institutions and to school children throughout the State.

The Gondal Union, a society of educated men at the capital, took the occasion to present the Yuvaraja with an Address on Sunday, February 12, in the central hall of the Grasia College. Rajkumar Bhojrajjee and his father were received by the President, Mr. M. A. Turkhud, and other office-bearers and conducted in a procession to the dais.

After introducing the Yuvaraja, Mr. Turkhud read the Address conveying their congratulations to him on the auspicious occasion of his marriage.

The Address, after being read was put in a *Kinkhab* bag and presented to the Yuvaraja to which he made a suitable reply.

The members of the Gondal Municipality and the Sir Bhagvat Singhjee Library, also presented congratulatory Addresses to the bridegroom.

The wedding ceremonies were not concluded until substantial presents had been bestowed, according to the custom, upon hundreds of *charans*, *bhānds* and beggars who had congregated in Gondal at the time of the rejoicings in the expectation of receiving largess.

A little less than two years later the Thakore Sahib, accompanied by the Rani Sahiba, the three Princesses—Bakunverba, Leilaba and Taraba—and their two youngest sons—Kumars Shree Kirit Singhjee and Nutver Singhjee—departed for England to arrange for the Kumars' education. They were absent for eight months. Kirit Singhjee and Nutver Singhjee entered the Victoria College, Jersey. These two Kumars had received their elementary education at the Grasia College in Gondal.

During the Thakore Sahib's absence the Yuvaraja shared with the Diwan (Mr. Manilal Govindram) the responsibility of administering the State.

Bakunverba, who had returned home in 1901 after finishing her education in Scotland, continued her art studies and successfully passed, with distinction, the examinations of the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art in Bombay. Her younger sister Leilaba, who, though she had made several trips to Europe with her parents, had secured her entire education at the Monghiba Girls' School in Gondal, also was successful at the same examinations.

CHAPTER XXI

Twenty-five years' Rule

Monarchs who live to complete a quarter of a century's rule generally mark the occasion with jubilation. Wearing rose-tinted glasses, they sit on high pedestals and make the events in which they take pride whirl past them in an ostentatious procession from which everything untoward that may have occurred is rigidly excluded.

Sometimes it happens however that a ruler who has passed the twenty-fifth milestone of his reign is capable of turning his gaze inwards. He examines the record of his administration in a detached manner, much as a surgeon does his patient's symptoms. He does not ignore, or even undervalue, his achievement, nor does he shut his eyes to things left undone or that might have been done better.

The completion of a quarter of a century of rule was to Bhagvat Sinhjee, with his highly developed faculty for introspection, not a moment for exultation but a time for prayer and thought. He fervently thanked Providence for carrying his State and him through years of tribulation and took stock of his administration to determine the nature and scope of the reforms that he might effect for his people's benefit.

He had an infallible standard by which to gauge the record of his 25 years' rule. On the threshold of power he, of his own motion, had solemnly promised that:

- (1) life and property in the State should be protected;
- (2) justice and order should prevail;
- (3) the agricultural classes should be permitted to enjoy the fruits of their labour;
- (4) the merchants should be enabled to reap the fullest benefit from trade;
- (5) roads should be improved and other communications facilitated;
- (6) education should be encouraged;
- (7) Provision should be made for the sick poor. He had also given an undertaking that
- (8) the study of the needs of his people would be his chief care; and that
- (9) their contentment and happiness would be his chief reward.

Thrown into a sea heaving with mountainous billows of flattery, he had schooled himself to take a calm, prudent measure of the situation with which he was confronted. As will be apparent from a speech that will be dealt with a little later, he knew that while he had made considerable progress towards his self-appointed destination, he yet had a long way to go. The objective, in fact, seemed to him to recede as he advanced towards it: for as he grew older and acquired experience his ideas and ambitions developed and he found it increasingly difficult to satisfy himself.

His people however knew how better off they were on August 25, 1909, than they had been 25 years earlier. They also could compare their own condition with that of their neighbours and find great satisfaction in making that comparison. The completion of a

quarter of a century's reign by their Ruler was therefore a moment of unalloyed joy for them.

A committee of influential citizens was formed months earlier, to organize the festival in a manner befitting the occasion. Mr. Bezonji was invited to come from Rajkot, where he was devoting his time and money to succouring the poor and needy, to serve as the president of this body. Having seen the Thakore Sahib develop from a novice into an energetic, efficient Ruler, strict in exacting work but considerate, appreciative and kind towards the humblest of his employees, he was only too happy to answer the summons.

It was decided by the committee that while August 25 would be observed as a holiday throughout the State and celebrations would be held at that time, the chief functions of festivity would be postponed until the last week of October, when Bhagvat Sinhjee would enter the 46th year of his life. At their request October 24, 25 and 26 were to be devoted to this purpose.

The rejoicings began on August 25 at sunrise, with the firing of a salute of 25 guns—one for each year's rule. At eight o'clock candied sugar was distributed to all the school children in the State. At noon the inmates of the Bai Sahib Bi Asylum and the Bhagvat Sinhjee Orphanage were feasted. A rich repast was served to the prisoners in the Gondal jail through the thoughtfulness of Sheth Nurmahmad Ahmad, and poor persons were provided with food by the Hindu and Muslim merchants.

At two o'clock in the afternoon the State officials went to the "Huzur Bungalow" to offer congratulations to His Highness. A long procession, consisting of people professing various faiths, carrying flags and pennons and headed by a band, followed

them. His Highness, accompanied by his consort and children, received them and thanked them heartily for their good wishes.

The capital was brilliantly illuminated at night. His Highness, with his family, drove through the streets in the State carriage. They were greeted everywhere by enthusiastic crowds who loudly cheered them. As they passed, well-to-do persons threw silver coins and women standing in the balconies of their houses showered flowers and rice upon them in conformity with custom half as old as time.

The Hindus in the temples, the Jains in their *upashrayas* and the Muslims in their mosques, were, at the same time, invoking God to bless their Ruler with long life and happiness. As the royal equipage proceeded at a snail's pace, it was stopped by representatives of the various sections of the community at their respective places of worship and floral and other offerings were made to them. At the Nilkanth temple the Brahmans who had assembled there recited appropriate Vedic hymns. Crowds of cheering people followed His Highness in his progress through the town.

The joy of the people was augmented by the boons announced in the *Durbari Gazette* issued that morning. The most important among them was the abolition of customs duties. It removed the only fetter that hampered trade. While of direct advantage to merchants, its benefits were calculated to percolate to the humblest Gondali.

Bhayats and *Mulgrasias* were freed from the payment of debts due to the State of a date prior to Samvat 1900, (1884 A D) about which no special orders had been passed.

Jivaidar's holdings had previously been liable to forfeiture in case they died without leaving a son. In future, in such cases, if a *Jivaidar* left a uterine

brother, the *jivai* would descend to the latter, provided he resided in Gondal territory in conformity with his status.

State servants were given increments in their salaries.

All holders of charitable grants were given one month's allowance.

Cultivators were relieved of the obligation to pay the instalment of land revenue due in January 1910.

Each prisoner was remitted one twenty-fifth of his term of imprisonment. The period of life imprisonment was thereafter to be counted as 25 years.

To encourage higher education, an annual prize of Rs. 500 was promised to any girl passing the matriculation examination from any of the Gondal schools; and any Gondali boy who, after completing his studies in a school in the State, obtained a professional qualification, during any year, was to be given Rs. 1,000.

Each member of His Highness' family received a present of Rs. 5,000.

The celebrations on August 25 were however only a foretaste of those that were to take place two months later. Procession after procession passed through the streets on their way to the "Huzur Bungalow" to offer their felicitations to His Highness. The most important among them consisted of the Hindu Mahajans; the Muslim *Jamat*; officials; Kumars of the Grasia College carrying banners; students of the Sagramjee High School; Cavalry; foot police; and the State band. It was joined, *en route*, by His Highness the Maharaja Sahib of Bhavnagar, who had arrived at 10 A.M. on that day and had been received at the railway station by the Thakore Sahib, the Yuvaraja, State officials and members of the Reception Committee which had specially invited him. A guard of honour and a band had been in attendance and a

salute of eleven guns was fired as he alighted from the train. Accompanied by an escort of the Body-Guard, he had been conducted to the residence provided for him near the "Huzur Bungalow."

Shree Lakhajee Raj, the Thakore Sahib of Rajkot, also specially invited by the people, arrived by motor a couple of hours later.

At four o'clock in the afternoon on the 25 of October, the ceremony of presenting the people's Address took place.

A *shamiana* had been specially constructed in the octagon between the Grasia College and the Thakore Sahib's statue. The streets and buildings in that vicinity were decorated. The principal arch was made of evergreens and flowers and bore on one side the inscription: "The Ruler of Taxless People, Welcome," and on the other the words: "Happy People, Happy Ruler."

The approaches to the *shamiana* were densely crowded. Over 4,000 persons packed the pavilion to its utmost capacity long before 4-30 P.M.—the hour fixed for the presentation. They included the visiting Rulers, officials, *Bhayats*, *Mulgrasias*, *Jicaidars*, cultivators, Hindu and Muslim merchants, other notabilities and newspaper representatives.

Her Highness the Rani Sahiba, accompanied by the Yuvaraja, the Yuvarajni, the Princess Bakanverba and the Princess Leilaba, arrived by car at exactly four o'clock and were conducted to the dais. Immediately after them came the Maharaja of Bhavnagar and the Thakore Sahib of Rajkot, escorted by the Gondal Body-Guard. Received with the salutes and other honours that were their due, they were given seats near the members of the Royal Family. They were followed by Kumar Shree Ravat Khachar of Jasdan and his daughter.

A deputation consisting of the President of the Central Committee, had, in the meantime, gone to the "Huzur Bungalow" to invite His Highness. Without keeping them waiting even for a moment, he, escorted by the Body-Guard, started and reached the *shamiana* at 4-15 p.m. A salute of eleven guns was fired and a guard of honour drawn up with the State band at the entrance presented arms.

People showered flowers on the Thakore Sahib as he moved towards the dais. Raja and commoner rose and remained standing until he took his seat.

The Address read by Mr. Bezoni recounted, in simple language, His Highness' achievements during the past twenty-five years. Since much of the ground has been covered in the chapters that have preceded this, it is necessary only to direct attention to the salient passages contained in it.

It pointed out that His Highness had faithfully lived up to the undertaking that he had given 25 years earlier. In consequence great progress had been made in Gondal.

(1) Security of life and property had increased 50 per cent.

(2) The wheels of law and justice ran smoothly and speedily in the law courts.

(3) The agriculturists had been given the right of ownership in their houses and of alienating their occupancy rights in land. Land revenue totalling Rs.17,25,000 had been remitted.

The number of wells had been doubled. The Veri Irrigation and Water Works and the Paneli Irrigation Lake, costing Rs.12,30,000, had protected Gondal subjects from famine and disease.

(4) Every facility had been given to develop trade. Among the taxes abolished were import and octroi duties.

(5) One hundred miles of new, spacious roads had been added.

Railways had been considerably extended at a cost of Rs. 38,00,000.

Gondal and Dhoraji had been connected by telephone with most of the villages.

Many buildings had been erected in the capital and principal towns. The various works of public utility had cost Rs. 1,50,00,000.

(6) The number of schools had risen from 65 to 108; the number of boys attending them from 3,230 to 7,962; the number of girls from 217 to 783; teachers' salaries from Rs. 13,000 to Rs. 75,000; and the average annual educational expenditure from the State Treasury from Rs. 11,000 to Rs. 61,000. Facilities had been provided for secondary education.

(7) The medical staff had been increased by 40 per cent.; the number of patients treated by 50 per cent.; and the number of surgical operations by 50 per cent.

(8) The people expressed their deep gratitude to the Thakore Sahib for making them "contented and happy." They acknowledged that

(9) he had "ever made himself accessible to all classes." The "kindness, courtesy and patience which had invariably characterized his intercourse with them and the sympathy with their best interests so eminently displayed in his administration" had "left a deep and lasting impression upon their hearts."

They also took occasion to express their love and loyal devotion to Her Highness the Rani Sahiba. She had "won a warm corner in their hearts by her sympathetic and kind nature, her piety, her efforts in the cause of women's education, her literary gifts and her philanthropy that refused to be deflected by distinctions of caste, creed or race." They could not,

they declared, "forget the deep interest and personal trouble she took in alleviating the sufferings of the famine-stricken in the dire famine of 1900."

They also eulogized the Yuvaraja Shree Bhojrajjee who had, they declared, "already won their affectionate regard...by his simplicity, amiability and urbanity."

The Address was presented in a silver casket of exquisite Cutch-work. Immediately afterwards another Address, also enclosed in a casket was presented by representatives of Gondalis residing in Burma.

The Thakore Sahib sincerely appreciated the warmth of the tribute paid him by his "beloved people" and the hearty good wishes for continued health and prosperity extended to him. He was, he said, "very deeply touched by the tone of sincere loyalty pervading it" and by "the good wishes and appreciative terms in which they had referred to Her Highness and the Heir-Apparent."

No part of the Address had been more welcome to him than the one in which he had been told that his people were happy and contented. His "highest ambition had been to secure their contentment and happiness." Their assurance that he had succeeded in that effort would strengthen him in his further endeavours in those directions.

In his modesty he added that he could "see no end to the path of progress." The ideal appeared to him to be difficult of attainment. Still he intended to "follow the path keeping the ideal constantly in view. Appreciation of one's effort in that direction was no small encouragement in the march, but the rate of progress really depended on the amount of co-operation received from the people."

Like a father talking to his children, he exhorted the officials and the people to unite in preventing any disturbing element from obstructing peaceful

progress. Smooth and harmonious action could, he warned them, "be secured only by co-ordination of different factors and by defining the sphere of each in such a way that one would not overlap or interfere with the other."

He had delimited the respective spheres of action of the State and the citizens. "The business of the State is to clear the ground by removing obstructions and to provide facilities," he told them. But "development of the various branches of art, industry and commerce as well as social reform must rest with the people."

His Highness gratefully alluded to the fact that in the Address that had been presented no mention had been made of any shortcomings. Perhaps, he remarked, they were among those gifted persons who realized "that criticism without...knowledge of all the facts was not of much value." In making that statement he did not mean to suggest that his administration had been free from defects. No human institution could be perfect. He did mean however that every act of administration had behind it the desire to do good to the public. Considerations of a personal nature had not swayed him in formulating or executing any policy, during the quarter of a century of his stewardship.

He thanked the officials who had loyally co-operated driving the complex machinery of administration and solemnly affirmed that

"...the interests of my dear subjects are deeply embedded in my heart and the prosperity of Gondal and the happiness of my people have always been, and will ever remain, the paramount consideration to the end of my time."

At the close of his reply, the visiting Rajas congratulated him in well-chosen phrases; and poets

recited compositions in Sanskrit, Gujarati, Hindi and English. Mulgrasia Vakhat Sinhjee Gagjibhai of Bhimora announced that in honour of the occasion he had remitted to his tenants one-fourth of the land assessment they owed him and expressed his readiness to lay down his life, if occasion arose, in the service of his overlord.

At night His Highness drove through the brilliantly illuminated streets. Everywhere enthusiastic crowds greeted him with loud cheers.

The Thakore Sahib of Limbdi, who had been unable to reach Gondal on the Jubilee day, arrived on the 26, along with the Yuvaraja and the chief officers of his State. He was accorded all the honours due to his rank and was escorted to the Guest House.

The night of the 26 was celebrated with a magnificent display of fireworks on the left bank of the Gondli, opposite the Grasia College. At the close of the pyrotechnics the Maharaja of Bhavnagar left Gondal by a special train.

A torch-light procession half a mile long was formed at eleven o'clock by the Kamars of Grasia College and the students of the Sagramjee High School, carrying torches and flags. It started from the Grasia College and escorted the Thakore Sahib's carriage, which also contained the other members of the Royal Family and the Thakore Sahib of Limbdi, to the "Huzur Bungalow." Marching to the strains of music, it was joined by thousands of persons who fell in step with it as it passed.

On its way through the brightly lit and densely thronged streets the carriage was stopped at almost every door while Bhagvat Sinhjee's "dear people" presented him with *attar* and *pan*, garlanded him and showered gold and silver flowers and coins on him. The garlands and bouquets were so heaped around

him that he could hardly be seen. It took the procession five hours to cover less than a mile; and the palace was not reached until four o'clock the next morning.

A fair was held near His Highness' statue during the three days of the Jubilee celebrations. The town remained decorated and was illuminated each night. Everyday social functions of one kind or another—breakfast, garden, evening and supper parties—were organized.

The united Mahomedan Jamats of the State invited the Thakore Sahib, his family and friends to be their guests for the three days of the celebration. The invitation was accepted and the hospitality was lavish.

Bhagvat Sinhjee also received from his subjects and admirers many tokens of their esteem, mostly articles made of silver. So deeply touched was he by these demonstrations of loyalty and affection that he sent out the following message:

"The enthusiasm with which my beloved people and others have celebrated my Silver Jubilee throughout the State on the 24, 25, and 26 of October, 1909 and the spontaneous demonstrations of loyalty and attachment have produced a deep impression upon my mind. I earnestly hope that the mutual feelings evinced during those days may continue for ever."

Telegrams and letters of congratulation were received by His Highness from numerous friends and well-wishers in various parts of India and abroad, including Sir George Clarke (afterwards the Lord Sydenham of Combe), then the Governor of Bombay and the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda.

The Silver Jubilee was specially marked by numerous donations to encourage education. On October 24 the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, who had presided at a prize

distribution at the Monghiba Girls' School, announced the foundation of an annual prize of Rs.50 to be awarded to the girl passing first in the highest class at the annual examination. It was to take the form of a gold neck ornament with a locket bearing the effigy of his consort—Her Highness the Rani Sahiba Shree Nandkunverba.

On the same occasion Mr. Narsinhbhai Harjivan Dave distributed prizes worth Rs.100 and his son Prabhashankar deposited Rs.300, the interest from which was to be used for providing books and other materials to deserving girls.

The Thakore Sahib of Limbdi presided at the annual distribution of prizes to successful Kumars of the Grasia College held in the College Hall on August 26. Towards the close of the ceremony he announced the establishment of a scholarship of Rs.15 per month, to be called after his eldest son, the Yuvaraja Shree Digvijay Sinhjee, who had commenced his school career at the Grasia College. It was to be given to the Grasia Kumar who, after finishing his course at that institution, took up agricultural studies. He further promised to give Rs.1,000, the interest from which was to be utilized for awarding prizes annually to the students of the Grasia College on the 25 of August.

At the end of a party given in Kailas Bagh on October 29 the united Hindu Mahajans of Gondal, Dhoraji and Upleta announced through their host (Sheth Panachand Naranji of Gondal), that in commemoration of the Silver Jubilee an annual prize would be given from the interest of Rs.500, to a Hindu student of the State standing highest at any of the drawing examinations of the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art. Sheth Tribhovandas Dhanji of the Bhayavadar Ginning Factory endowed the Bhayavadar schools with Rs.500 for the purpose of founding

prizes for the boy and girl standing first at the annual examinations of the Taluka School and the Girls' School respectively. They were to be known as the "Shree Bhagvat Sinhjee Silver Jubilee Prizes."

The people had collected Rs.75,000 as a thanksgiving offering, to be spent as His Highness saw fit. The idea was to erect a building that would take the form of a permanent memorial and Sir George Clarke was invited to lay the foundation-stone during his forthcoming tour of Kathiawar early in 1910.

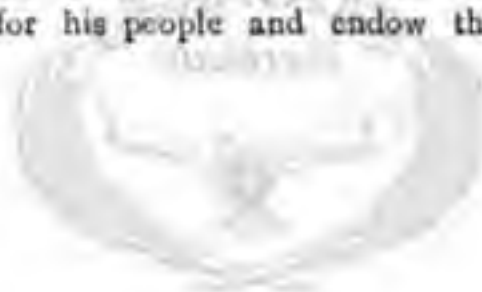
His Excellency arrived in Gondal on January 25 and was shown every place of interest. When he reached the spot near the railway station where the Silver Jubilee Institute, as it was then named, was to be built, he found that a large *shamiana* had been pitched for the ceremony.

Mr. Bezonji explained that the memorial was meant as the people's tribute to the Thakore Sahib for the enlightened manner in which he had been carrying on the administration and the way in which he had "tried his best to promote the prosperity and social advancement of his subjects." All the beneficent measures introduced in his State during the last quarter of a century bore the stamp of his personality.

His Excellency made many appreciative references to the Thakore Sahib in the address he delivered in laying the foundation-stone. "One could not," he said, "drive through this beautiful city without feeling that a watchful eye had been upon its public institutions for years and that, indeed, everything possible had been done to promote the health and prosperity of the people." In his estimation Bhagvat Sinhjee had shown "what could be done by an enlightened and able Chief when relieved from the great expense of having to defend himself."

Sir George Clarke felt that the Jubilee Institute would "do much to promote the welfare and enlightenment of the people of Gondal." He trusted that the Committee would not forget the technical and industrial aspect of the institution. He believed "thoroughly in the value of technical education not merely in promoting industry but in its practical value in acting as a check to the speculative philosophy of which there is so much in India."

After long and anxious thought His Highness decided that the money collected by the people could best be spent upon building and equipping a modern workshop where many articles then being imported into the State could be manufactured; and that would create employment for his people and endow them with skill.



CHAPTER XXII

Building up Finance

I first met the Thakore Sahib shortly after the Silver Jubilee celebration. I saw enough of him during the few days I spent at his capital to be convinced that his gaze was turned towards the future and I was sure that, vouchsafed life and strength, he would attempt to put through great and bold administrative reforms.

I wondered however where the money would come from for village reconstruction, town improvement and other schemes he contemplated. The rebuilding of villages and towns, the construction of paved roads, the regulation of streams that at times became turbulent, the building of spacious, bright, airy school-houses and other works of public utility such as he apparently had in mind would cost an immense sum of money. With the resources of the State so limited as they were, how would he be able to finance them? He could, I was convinced, make a rupee go farther than almost any one with whom I had come in contact.

The financial routine perfected during the preceding two decades had sealed up the avenues through which leakages formerly occurred. The rules regulating the Treasury were strict. So was the procedure governing pre-audit and post-audit.

Lynx-eyed investigators known as *tapasni kamdars* were constantly on tour checking entries in registers with appropriate vouchers. Few irregularities escaped them.

This ever vigilant financial control, had enabled the Thakore Sahib to accumulate considerable reserves. They made it possible, as has been noted, for him to weather storm after storm without needing to raise a loan.

This result was certainly gratifying. There was, nevertheless, the future to consider. The difference between the income from all sources and the expenditure, in a normal year, was too small to provide for any ambitious programme of expansion.

It was, of course, possible to raise more money in the form of taxes. Compared with their neighbours, Gondal farmers and traders got off very lightly so far as the State demand was concerned.

The Thakore Sahib had however resolutely refused to add to his people's burdens. He had, on the contrary, wiped out *vero* after *vero*. He might well have imposed an income or professional tax in lieu of these *veros*, as a consolidated impost; but the idea was repugnant to him. He would not even permit the municipalities he maintained at Gondal, Dhoraji, Upleta, Bhayavadar and Sarsai to levy any of the usual rates, choosing to meet the cost of the various urban services and to provide for municipal works, from the State Treasury.

The money needed for schemes that he had in mind a quarter of a century back would therefore have to be found from some other source. Here the Ruler's financial acumen came to the people's rescue. By addressing himself to the task of obtaining exclusive control over the railways and managing them economically and efficiently, he greatly enhanced the income from economic undertakings.

One aspect of the building up of the financial resources needs to be described in some detail. It relates to the railways, in the construction of which by far the largest percentage of savings accumulated until the Silver Jubilee had been locked up.

The struggle to pull the "iron horse" out of the slough of financial depression had begun long before the Jubilee year. It was destined to be so stubborn and protracted that a less resolute man than Bhagvat Sinhjee would have hesitated to embark upon it, or having done so would not have persisted in his course.

It may be recalled that in the early years of his regime, when he was developing the system, he had anticipated that while the railways would promote the people's prosperity they would be far from remunerative financially. Events justified his forecast.

They were, to be sure, a great success from the point of view of opening up the country and providing a cheap and ready means of transport. They gave a great impetus to agriculture and led to the multiplication of cotton presses and ginning factories.

But financially they were an almost complete disappointment. The return yielded on the capital invested was poor regarded even from the point of view of financiers of those days, when the rates of interest were low compared with those that prevailed during the war and the post-war period.

Though the Thakore Sahib had anticipated the result, as can be gathered from a speech quoted in the chapter dealing with the development of the railway system, he questioned the wisdom of this dictum as years rolled by and he acquired a firm grip over the administration. Fatalism had no fascination for him. He was, on the contrary, strongly disposed to probe deeply into matters that other persons regarded as inevitable; and frequently the results of his probing

showed how gullible some men reputed to be wise really were.

The more he pondered the railway problem, the more he was convinced that it was susceptible of improvement. With efficient, economical management and equitable allocation of profits between the joint owners of the property, the return, he was sure, could be greatly enhanced. This conviction grew stronger year by year.

His hands were fettered however. The lines that ran through his territory had been only partly built with Gondal money. They were tied up with railways owned by neighbouring States; and worked by an agency outside his control. He therefore had no chance to demonstrate that, given the opportunity, he could greatly improve railway earnings.

To grasp the facts, it is necessary to go back to the time when the Thakore Sahib was persuaded to help to push the railway to Porbandar. The arrangement did not prove advantageous.

For a time he hoped that the situation would brighten after the completion of the schemes for adding to the attractions of Porbandar as a port. That hope proved illusory.

Convinced that the situation was unsuceptible of improvement so long as Porbandar, through long allocation, enjoyed an advantage over Gondal, the Thakore Sahib decided to have the agreement under which the Railway was worked on the "combined system" wound up as from January 1, 1901, when the term expired. After some correspondence, the Government of India agreed: but arrangements for taking over the line could not be completed in time.

He consented to the continuance of the existing system temporarily. To his intense disappointment, it remained alive for another decade.

A British syndicate saw in the bickerings going on among the various owners of the Kathiawar railways an opportunity to enrich itself and tried to acquire the system on lease. But the offer it made was considered to be one-sided and was rejected.

A proposal to entrust the working of the railways to a company met no better fate. Bhagvat Sinhjee, for one, was no believer in the idea of entrusting a vital service owned by the State to a company that had no financial stake in the undertaking. He therefore continued to press his point until it was finally decided that, as from April 1, 1911, the "combined system" should be dissolved and each proprietary State should commence working its own railway.

Despite difficulties however railway administration was quickly placed upon a business basis. So impressed with that fact was the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda that, in 1912, he entrusted the working of his newly completed Khijadya-Dhari Railway to Bhagvat Sinhjee.

The Bhagvat Sinhjee Silver Jubilee Workshops, situated next door to the Depot can cope with the heaviest repairs to locomotives, carriages and waggons. Rolling stock, signals, furniture for carriages and other articles are built in them.

Railway administration in Gondal has run smoothly. There have, of course, been seasonal ups and downs, due to the fact that the goods traffic consists largely of agricultural products and manufactures based upon them and therefore any calamity such as drought or flood, from which farming may suffer, also adversely affects the transition service.

The profits from the railways have been steadily increasing.

The Civil List has not changed during the last 62 years. It was Rs.1,44,000 in 1933, as it was in 1884, at the time of his investiture.

This sum is stretched to cover expenses which in many of the States are borne by the Treasury.

His Highness has also insisted upon meeting, from his privy purse, expenses incurred upon the ceremonies connected with his family. The nuptials of the Kumari Shree Leilaba in May, 1920 is an illustration to this. It extended over five days, during which time the offices and schools remained closed.

She was betrothed to His Highness the Raja Rana Sahib Bhagatchand, the enlightened Rajput Ruler of Jubbal, one of the Simla Hill States. The bridegroom arrived in Gondal by special train on the morning of May 10 and was received with befitting honours.

In the evening of the following day the principal ceremony was performed and Their Highnesses gave the bride away according to the ancient Hindu ceremonies. She was without a veil during the ceremony, as she had been all her life.

Deputations from Cutch, Junagadh, Bhavnagar, Dhrangadhra, Morvi, Dharampore, Wankaner, Limbdi, Rajkot, Rajpipla, Chuda, Jasdan, Mangrol, Kotda, Virpur and Bantwa were present to offer the customary *poshaks* and felicitations.

The bridegroom came in procession, riding on horseback. The newly married couple, on the return journey, rode in a coach and four and were attended by a large concourse of attendants walking close together and bearing torches, forming a fascinating picture of Oriental splendour.

The minor ceremonies were not concluded until May 15 when the Raja Rana and the Rani Sahiba departed, by special train, for their forest-clad State situated within sight of the eternal snows of the western range of the Himalayas.

In honour of the event His Highness announced a number of boons. All full-time servants of the State

who were on duty on May 10 were given a bonus of 25 per cent. of their pay; and all scholarship holders were shown the same favour. Mr. Panachand Champsi was given a special reward of Rs. 500 as a mark of appreciation of his services in connection with irrigation. All *talbana* (fines imposed for delay in disposing of papers) were remitted. So was the interest owed to the State by cultivators for the year 1919. Other debts due from subjects, amounting to Rs. 25,000 were written off.

To enable farmers to subsist until the next harvest without recourse to money-lenders, the *rulika* system, by which the State stood as guarantor for loans to landholders, was put into operation. In addition Rs. 10,000 were set aside for the maintenance of cattle, as might be required.

A scholarship to be called after the bride, amounting to Rs. 25 a month, was promised to any girl student who, after completing her school career in a Gondal institution and passing the matriculation examination from the Monghiba Girls' High School, prosecuted her studies in a college; and two minor scholarships were awarded to certain pupils then studying at the Girls' High School.

Eight prisoners were released from jail at sunrise on the day of the marriage.

While personally pursuing a policy of self-abnegation, Bhagvat Singhjee has not hesitated to enhance, from time to time, the emoluments paid to persons in State service. Apart from the special allowances given them during times of famine and scarcity and the increments and bonuses bestowed upon them on his birthday and other auspicious occasions, he has increased salaries to keep pace with the ever rising cost of living, especially after the commencement of hostilities in Europe in the autumn of 1914.

The State servants have also been given security of tenure which they did not formerly enjoy. Years ago rules were promulgated for holding competitive examinations for admission to the services and regulating the promotion of those already thus employed. Candidates aspiring to be *karkuns* or *aval-karkuns* were required to possess satisfactory knowledge of accounting and cognate subjects.

A number of examining boards were set up. The examinations were conducted at stated times and were partly written and partly oral.

Human beings in distress have never appealed to His Highness in vain. No matter how distant the place from which the cry of anguish emanated, he was quick to respond to it.

In 1919-20 there was, for instance, famine in Bankura, in Bengal. He immediately had a check for Rs.15,000 sent for the relief of the sufferers, and also contributed Rs.2,000 to the Central Famine Relief Fund.

A little later he read accounts of the hardships to which his countrymen in South Africa were being subjected. He immediately sent Rs.10,000, to which Her Highness the Rani Sahiba added Rs.2,000 from her own purse, to be used to relieve distress. He also subscribed Rs.1,000 towards building a school for Indians in the South African Union.

Nearer home he sent Rs.5,000 and his consort sent Rs.500 for the relief of sufferers from the floods in Palitana. The same year his philanthropy, wandering further afield, he forwarded Rs.15,00 to the Lord Mayor of London, with the request that it be used to relieve distress among the destitute sufferers from the explosion in a Cardiff (Wales) coal mine.

Nor did religious or other consideration enter into his mind in bestowing charity. It was enough for him to know that it was needed. He gave the Young

Men's Christian Association Rs.2,000 to use in assisting Indian students in England.

Immediately the Viceroy opened a fund for succouring the people who were suffering as the result of the earthquake in Bihar in 1934, he sent Rs.1,00,000. The Maharaj-Kumari Bakunverba added Rs.10,000 from her purse.

In the main however Bhagvat Singhjee has felt that the money that poured into the Treasury was not his to spend as he pleased, but that it belonged to his own people to whom it should be returned in one form or another. This policy has been reflected even in his benefactions.

For instance, interest from the Rs.15,000 he set apart for a memorial to King-Emperor Edward VII., provided ten scholarships for the encouragement of higher education among his own people. They were distributed between the Grasia College, the Sagranji High School and the Monghiba Girls' High School.

Apart from the income derived from investments in railways and other undertakings, the land constituted—and continues to constitute—the largest source of revenue. Just man that he is, His Highness has tried to regulate his policy so as to put back into the village the largest possible amount of the wealth contributed by it to the State coffers.

The schemes for the improvement of farming, cattle-breeding and rural areas will be dealt with in other chapters. So will the construction of school buildings in the villages and of roads, culverts and bridges to link the cultivators' fields and houses with the marts. Attention will also be called to the systematic work done through specially prepared text-books and carefully regulated instruction within the class rooms and in the gardens attached to the schools, to inspire the sons and daughters of farmers and artisans with

love of Nature and imbue them with the desire to remain in the environment in which they were born and there to create for themselves and their neighbours new social and intellectual amenities.

Elsewhere too, in this volume, will be discussed the various means employed to increase material prosperity and to prevent unemployment and the measures taken to safeguard life against disease. Reference has already been made to the efforts to put down dacoity, to protect property and to deal out even-handed justice.

These, then, are the principal objects upon which money is spent by Bhagvat Sinhjee in normal years. In abnormal times, as has been shown, he, in addition to maintaining the various services, undertakes schemes, often very costly, to fight famine and to combat epidemics. The remissions in the form of land revenue that he has granted since his investiture, the special concessions in the form of bonuses and pensions and money-presents and the amount relinquished by the abolition of taxes of one kind or another, in themselves total Rs.1,00,00,000.

CHAPTER XXIII

Works of Public Utility

It is not at all uncommon to see His Highness seated at his desk in the library, its four walls lined with books from floor to ceiling examining a plan submitted by the State Engineer for his approval. A visitor who may chance to see him thus engaged may be sure that the Ruler of Gondal is not contemplating putting up a new palace in the capital or in some favoured spot in the hills, or erecting a shooting box in some jungle.

To obtain his sanction for a building plan is no easy matter. Rarely is a drawing sent back without modification in the interests of æsthetics, sanitation or public safety.

Nor is this searching examination over when the plan has been passed in the rough. Bhagvat Sinbjee will scrutinize, with as great care, the sketch altered to meet his wishes.

So intellectually sincere is he that if he finds that the changes made at his bidding do not result in improving the project, he will ask the State Engineer to suggest further alterations, or if need be, direct him to go back to the original plan. In this, as in many other matters, he does not fit in with one's preconceived notions of a Raja ruling without the check of a sovereign assembly.

One day a week is told off for the State Engineer to see him. Armed with plans and specifications that official repairs to Bhagvat Sinhjee's office in the Durbargarh, or to his study in the "Huzur Bungalow."

When the Ruler is finally satisfied he places his signature on the plan. Without his imprimatur no work can be started. A proposal for straightening a crook in a street for placing a standard bearing a cluster of electric lights, or for altering the facade of a public building, will have to pass the barrage of his criticism before it can be executed. His requirements in respect of light, ventilation, sanitation and fire protection are extremely exacting.

But for Bhagvat Sinhjee's accessibility to the officials of the Public Works Department and his unremitting industry even at an age regarded in India as advanced, schemes would be held up. He has no business of his own and no hobby to take his mind off the administration. It is therefore he who, at times, has to wait for the plan that he has ordered to be drawn.

His Highness insists, for one thing, that plans be submitted to him in such detail as to render a personal visit to the site unnecessary. It may impose more work upon the draughtsmen: but in the end time and energy are saved. It gives them, moreover, discipline that they would otherwise lack. It may be noted, *en passant*, that in this way Bhagvat Sinhjee has been instilling in the officials habits of orderliness and punctuality—in itself a most valuable training in what would otherwise have been an Indian back-water.

His own high sense of duty often, nevertheless, drags him to the site where new works are to be inaugurated. He has been known to drive for miles over rough country to decide the alignment of a road.

He spares his engineers, in such matters, no more than he spares himself. Plans have to be altered

again and again until he is fully satisfied that a change suggested in the name of progress will indeed be an improvement and not merely an attack upon a relic of the past inspired by impatient modernism.

More attention and money have, during his rule, been lavished upon raising temples of learning in the State than upon structures of any other description. Mention was made of the buildings erected for the Grasia College early in his régime. Schools in Gondal and other towns have received hardly less generous treatment.

The care bestowed by the Ruler in such matters is exemplified by the structural alterations to the Monghiba Girls' High School necessitated by the increase in attendance.

In planning school buildings His Highness prefers to concentrate attention upon perfecting the interior economy rather than lavishing money upon producing an exterior that would stun the visitor. In the interests of the health and comfort of students and teachers alike, the Public Works Department must invariably conform to certain principles:

(1) Adequate cubic space must be provided in each class room for every student who will receive instruction in it.

(2) Provision must be made, on a generous scale, for ventilation and light.

(3) Liberal space must be allotted for laboratories for teaching science.

(4) Suitable conveniences must be installed adequate to the needs.

(5) A garden and playground must be attached to the school.

(6) All school buildings and the grounds in which they stand must conform to the highest standards of sanitary science.

(7) Schoolhouses must be of fire-proof construction.

It must be noted that these regulations apply not merely to schoolhouses in towns but also to those in villages. The notion that it was the quality of instruction that mattered and not the surroundings in which it was imparted, does not appeal to Bhagvat Sinhjee. The shade provided by a wide-spreading tree, or a dingy mud hovel, or a tumble-down temple or mosque, may have been deemed good enough elsewhere and in other days for teaching the young; but he will not have educational institutions of this description in any place over which he has control.

In his estimation the environment in which education is imparted exercises considerable influence over the growing mind. Children who spend a goodly part of their waking hours in a schoolhouse aesthetically designed are far more likely to acquire a sense of the beautiful than those who receive instruction in dark, dismal surroundings.

Considerations of health, too, cannot be disregarded without prejudice to the physique of the little ones, particularly in a country where rain often descends in a downpour and where, during the dry season, the heat is scorching. The protection of health must therefore be regarded as a necessity, not only for its own sake but even more so because of its reaction upon the mind.

The standard prescribed for a school in even the smallest village is therefore high, especially for India. No matter how small the number of children of school-going age, the building must cost at least Rs.10,000.

A school in one of the larger villages costs anywhere up to Rs.1,00,000 or more. A visitor used to conditions prevailing elsewhere in India can hardly refrain from expressing astonishment at the liberality shown in Gondal.

For years the policy of removing the school from within the village to a suitable open space usually just outside the gate, has been pursued. It enables children to spend at least the hours devoted to study in salubrious conditions.

Bhagvat Sinhjee's conception of a school is that it should serve as a social centre for the whole village and be not merely a place where children receive instruction. That fact has to be born in mind in designing and erecting the buildings.

The choice of a site for a school is not lightly made. The State Engineer cannot, for one thing, use the machinery available elsewhere to pounce upon any plot that he may deem suitable for the purpose. The Ruler will not permit a cultivator to be evicted from a holding or part of a holding. He dislikes the acquisition of even a site capable of being brought under the plough, or a piece of land that has been used, for any length of time, for grazing or some other common village purpose.

In the old days, when the peace of a rural community was likely to be disturbed by invading hosts or bands of dacoits, a village had to be given the character of a fortified settlement. A wall had to be built round it and ingress and egress regulated through a single gate pierced, at a point of vantage, in the ramparts.

In this gate were stationed armed men, supposed to be on guard day and night. As has been related, Bhagvat Sinhjee's great ancestor—Bha Kumbhoji—drove terror into the hearts of would-be despoilers by turning these "*kothas*" into miniature forts.

A person gifted with imagination may find romance in these circumstances; but a sanitarian and social reformer cannot but deplore the huddled existence rendered inevitable within the mud walls. Tenements,

both insubstantial and ugly, are crowded one against the other. Light and air are kept out as if they were poison. Men, women and children are packed like figs in a box, in small, low, dark rooms with hardly any ventilation.

Village improvement in Gondal, is no light task. Progress is moreover retarded because until Bhagvat Sinhjee's time no great trouble was taken to enlighten the minds of the peasants, who, though intelligent by nature, are, with difficulty weaned from the notions in which they have grown up.

No conscientious ruler can shelve the problem because of the work and expense it entails and still have peace of mind. It would, in any case, be a short-sighted policy; for conditions that breed disease destroy producers of wealth, or at least reduce their economic capacity; and the State, dependent upon them for revenue, suffers along with the individuals affected.

Nor can epidemics be permitted to ravage the population as they will. Medical relief must be rushed to areas in the grip of the goddess of smallpox or the ogre of cholera or plague. Such operations cost money. —

Village improvement is therefore imperative from consideration of a practical and humanitarian character alike. A son of the soil like Bhagvat Sinhjee, who is anxious to return to the country-side as much as possible of the money he receives from it in revenue, naturally wishes to make it pleasing to the eye as well as healthy to live in. From the early years of his rule he has wished to add to the rural amenities.

Owing to the complexities involved, progress in village reconstruction has been slow: but some headway has already been made with it. The approaches to many a village have, for instance, ceased to be

the blot upon the landscape and the menace to health that they were. In many cases a road leads from the highway to the gateway recently built according to one or another approved design. On either side of the well-sprung arch is a room for the habitation of the *pasaita*.

The work of clearing and straightening the lanes has been taken in hand in some villages. Plans are under way for improving the *chora*—the general meeting place of the villagers. Some rural communities have themselves undertaken to repair and to whitewash the *dharmshalas* (rest-houses).

Attention has been given to low-lying places that become flooded or marshy during the rainy season and prevent the villagers from going to their fields or to market in town and the children from attending school. Where the level could not be raised, culverts have been constructed.

In the beginning outsiders made fun of these "blind bridges," as they were called because they did not lead to any town or *mandi* (market place). The money expended upon them was considered to have been wasted. It has however been realized that the expenditure was more than justified by the convenience afforded the villagers.

Most of the villages have been connected with the markets. The construction of an easy gradient has been a costly affair in many places, for a number of rivers and rivelets run through the State and their banks are often steep.

Money might have been saved by leaving unbridged streams that went dry or almost dry during the summer. Or expense might have been cut down by merely paving their beds with blocks of stone, as is done in other parts of Kathiawar. Recourse has not been had to such adventitious measures, for they are not economical in the long run.

Bhagvat Sinhjee's interest extends to the point of his selecting the size, type and position of the numerals or letters to be painted on each bridge, culvert and milestone. They must be ornamental as well as useful. He will sit on one of the stone benches which, under his instructions, have been placed alongside each culvert for the use of villagers and wayfarers, to make sure that it is not too high or otherwise uncomfortable.

The metalled roads now exceed 300 miles in length. The Ruler will not be satisfied until every farmer in his State is able to transport his produce, with ease, comfort and despatch, whenever it may suit his convenience or interest, to any place he may wish.

The extension of the telephone to every village enables the cultivator to keep track of fluctuations in prices and to sell his produce at the psychological moment.

The original telephone line connecting the "Huzur Bungalow" with the Darbargarh was built in 1887, after his Highness returned from his second European tour. Telephone wires have since been strung up all over the State. Gondal, with its 1,000 odd square miles of territory, has 300 miles of them, while British India, with more than 10,00,000 square miles, has only some 6,000 miles of them.

The policy has paid. In addition to enabling the people to communicate with one another by this rapid means, the administration has benefited. The telephone played an important part in the breaking up of outlawry. The police employ it to advantage in tracking criminals and recovering property.

Unending care has been taken to provide shade for the roads. So deep indeed has been Bhagvat Sinhjee's solicitude that he gave much time to the

compilation of a manual containing an elaborate and detailed set of rules to regulate this work.

Beauty is not however being sacrificed to utility. No variation is permitted in the type of tree selected for planting on a given stretch of road. Thus avenues several miles long, are being created.

The planting of trees now begins immediately the alignment has been decided upon, so that they may become established while the work of construction is progressing.

In planning town extensions and making improvements in congested areas, great thought has been bestowed upon providing for certain needs of the agriculturists which can be met only in urban areas. They have, for instance, to sell their produce in towns.

Markets for the sale of grain, vegetables and fruit are being built by the State in all important trade centres. The farmers can drive to them straight from their threshing floors, over roads in some cases expressly made for their benefit.

The principal towns have been undergoing a remodelling process. Despite the heavy outlay involved, effort has been made to widen and straighten roads and to provide "lungs."

Even greater progress has been registered in opening "extensions." Land lying outside the ramparts of Gondal and Dhoraji has been surveyed, levelled and "town-planned." After making liberal allowance for roads and amenities of one kind or another, the areas have been divided into building plots.

Since these extensions are meant to provide healthy and beautiful surroundings, the prices at which the plots are sold are fixed at a scale that leaves a small margin of profit to the State: but it has the satisfaction of seeing the sites taken up quickly.

The intelligence of the Gondal peasants is shown by the avidity with which the new town sites have been purchased by them. Some of them have, for example, invested their savings in erecting large, substantial buildings in the extensions beyond the ramparts of Dhoraji which they find no difficulty in renting on advantageous terms.

Purchasers of these suburban sites, be they farmers or urbanites, must agree to leave a minimum space for making a garden. When this condition was originally imposed many persons grumbled. Having grown up in congested conditions, they thought that valuable space was being wasted. They have gradually become educated out of such notions.

The State reserves areas in suitable localities in extensions for laying out parks and parklets to serve as "lungs" and for creating other amenities. Railway stations and tram terminuses are planned so as to provide the maximum convenience to the public with the least discomfort from noise, smoke and the like.

Regulations concerning the building of slaughter-houses, tanning, dyeing and other factories are exceedingly stringent. They may be erected only in places reserved for them beyond a prescribed distance from the residential area. The extensions are consequently growing up as veritable garden cities.

Plans for building theatres, cinemas and other places of amusement in spaces specially reserved for them, receive from the Ruler as rigid a scrutiny as those for any State building. Pillars must not interfere with the vision, nor must the auditorium be defective in respect of acoustic properties. Booths of fireproof construction must be erected for exhibiting films. All doors must open outwards and the buildings must comply in every respect with standard regulations.

The State Engineer closely supervises construction and prevents any departure from the approved plan, unless he is convinced that such alteration will add to the comfort or security of the people who will patronize the place. He is sent periodically to Bombay and other centres in British India to inspect amusement houses and other buildings and submit a memorandum containing his observations. His Highness subscribes to journals devoted to town planning, garden cities and kindred subjects and circulates them among the engineers.

In addition to carrying on the work of town improvement, the State bears the cost of such services as cleaning the streets and lighting them at night, in some cases with electricity and in others with gas made from petrol or kerosene. Pure drinking water is being supplied, wherever possible by pipes. Reference has already been made to the Gondal water supply scheme carried out as a part of famine relief work in 1900-01.

Since the State bears the expense incurred upon municipal works and services, no house-tax or wheel-tax or other rates are levied. In this respect Gondal stands in a category by itself.

The manner in which electricity was made available for lighting up towns illustrates the care taken to preserve an æsthetic environment. A contract had been given to an engineering firm for the electrification of the capital and the project had, in fact, somewhat advanced, when His Highness discovered that, as it was being carried out, it would ruin the appearance of the city and involve the mutilation or destruction of many trees.

He immediately ordered the State Engineer to stop the work and to formulate a new scheme for laying underground cables. He knew that this change

would involve a certain amount of waste and also that the laying of underground cables would be costlier than the construction of overhead lines. Though a rigid economist by nature and habit, he refused to agree to the destruction of the trees and the spoliation of the looks of the city. Gondal, in consequence, is lit by electricity supplied from underground cables. So also are Dhoraji and Upleta.

The standards bearing electric bulbs were specially made in conformity with Bhagvat Sinhjee's ideas.

He even designed the shades to be used in the public buildings. The pattern evolved was shown at the Exhibition held at Wembley in 1924, and was highly commended.

Lights are provided even in blind lanes with only a few houses. All streets are lit every night and not merely during the dark of the moon, as is the case in many places in Kathiawar—and indeed in other parts of India.

The rate at which electric power is being supplied is so reasonable that private concerns are using it more and more for industrial purposes. Factories for ice-making, wood-turning, weaving, ginning and ground-nut disintegrating, and printing presses, find it economic and efficient.

Local labour is employed as far as possible in laying electric cables and fixing the standards. Gondal subjects specially trained for the purpose are placed in charge of sub-stations and given other posts in the Electrical Department.

Electric wire and filament lamps cannot yet be made in Gondal: but nearly everything else needed by that department is manufactured at the Jubilee Workshops. Local manufactures provide work for the people. They make it possible to secure articles of special design. In many cases they are considerably

cheaper than those brought into the State. The electrical joint boxes made in Gondal, for instance, cost only one-tenth as much as those that are imported.

The gates needed for raising the level of the Veri Tank were also manufactured locally at about one-third the price asked for them by outside firms.

The desire to stimulate industry manifested itself even before the Thakore Sahib began to rule, as his *Journal* fully attests. The Workshops founded at the time of his investiture with administrative powers proved however a failure and had to be closed.

Instead of being down-hearted, he waited for a more favourable opportunity to make another effort. In the meantime he took care to give encouragement to every aspiring subject of whom he learnt.

When the Grasia College was being built, for instance, he was told that there was a *mistri* (mechanic) in the capital who claimed that he could make the clock to be installed in the tower. The man was sent for and stood the test to which he was subjected. His handiwork justified the faith reposed in him. A great variety of articles required by the Public Works and Railway departments are being manufactured in Gondal. They include railway carriages and waggons; asphalt boilers and cans; lamp posts and lanterns; electric apparatus for heating water, made according to a Gondal design; and the like.

But for this policy of using, as far as possible, materials made by local labour, Gondal would have had an unemployment problem to solve. The various works distributed over the State and the building construction programme of the new town-improvement schemes have given an impetus to trade and industry.

A system of apprenticeship in the Workshops is creating an ever-increasing body of mechanics,

There is a steady demand outside the State for men so trained who cannot be absorbed in Gondal.

It is estimated that since Bhagvat Sinhjee came into power something like Rs.3,00,00,000 have been spent upon the construction and repair of communications, public buildings, village and town improvement and kindred projects.

When it is recalled that at the time of his investiture the revenue of the State from all sources stood at less than Rs.13,00,000 a year and that during his long reign he has not only refrained from imposing new taxes but has actually relieved his people of many vexatious imposts, it seems almost incredible that his resources should stretch to such an elaborate and costly programme in addition to covering other activities of a routine and benevolent nature. But for the rigid economy exercised in managing Governmental affairs and the profitable investment of the accruing surpluses, such activities would have been impossible.

After Kumar Shree Kirit Sinhjee, Their Highnesses' third son, returned to Gondal upon the completion of his education in Europe, he was attached to the Public Works Department to gain an insight into its activities. Since 1922 he has been serving as the Director of Communications.

CHAPTER XXIV

Agricultural Advancement

One of the strangest colloquies that ever took place within palace precincts occurred one night many years ago in the front verandah of the "Huzur Bungalow" at Gondal. Two citizens of no special prominence arrived shortly after the Thakore Sahib had retired and insisted that the servant on duty should go up to his bedroom and awaken him.

The man was in a dilemma. He knew that His Highness had a busy day and was tired. Yet he could not take upon himself the responsibility of turning away citizens who, he knew, would not have come at that unseemly hour and insisted upon disturbing their Ruler unless their business was urgent.

When the Thakore Sahib came down and received his nocturnal visitors with his customary courtesy, he learnt that a few oranges and lemons were urgently needed for a woman who was lying very ill in the city. Diligent search had been made in the bazaar, but none were to be had.

An old man had suggested to them: "Go to Bapu, he is sure to have some in his bungalow and if he has he will gladly give them to you."

The lateness of the hour raised qualms in their hearts; but the old man encouraged them by saying

that His Highness might still be at work and even if he had retired he would not mind getting out of bed to oblige a sick woman. The Ruler put the visitors at ease and sent them back to town with the fruit they needed.

Such an incident would not be likely to occur to-day in Gondal, for during the intervening years the farmers have been persuaded to devote portions of their holdings to horticulture. Persistent effort has at last jolted them out of the inertia that made them stick to the few crops their fathers had produced before them and their sires ahead of them, and so on back to the times of the *Mahabharata*. By judiciously diversifying agriculture they are making more money and at the same time renewing the fertility of the soil.

About two years later he had eight acres adjoining the Kailas Bagh, fenced off for making agricultural and horticultural experiments. Wells were dug, pumps installed, improved implements likely to be useful imported and the work of upbreeding existing varieties, evolving new strains and acclimatizing exotic plants calculated to be of utility in India was taken in hand under the general superintendence of an enthusiastic young man who had recently taken his degree in agriculture from the Saidapet College, Madras, to whom reference has been made in another chapter.

The drought in 1899-1900 nearly destroyed the garden. Many plants and trees reared with great care and at considerable expense died and had to be cut up and sold as firewood.

But as soon as the Veri lake was completed a pipe line was laid to convey water to the farm. Since then the work has gone on uninterruptedly, except on one or two occasions when the supply

had to be carefully husbanded owing to scarcity of water.

A similar garden was established at Dhoraji and another at Upleta.

Some of the experiments in these gardens proved unsuccessful and had to be abandoned. No false sense of pride prevented the authorities from acknowledging failure.

Successful tests have however led to the introduction of many fruit trees, including lemons, limes, oranges, bananas, papaya, cocoanut and date-palms. The planting of mango and tamarind trees has been encouraged.

Experiments have also led to the introduction of a number of vegetables, such as American sweet potatoes, maize and tomatoes. Fennel, cummin, ginger, safflower and other plants yielding condiments have been tried with varying success. Coffee, tapioca and arrowroot have been tested. The last named crop is expected to yield a net profit of Rs. 36 per acre, except in times of unusual depression.

Experiments with cotton have led to the introduction of improved strains. Samples were submitted to the late Mr. Jamsetjee Tata and other large consumers of the product, who, in some cases had supplied the seed. They all testified to the improvement in quality.

New varieties of sugar-cane with a larger sugar content have been introduced or evolved. To encourage farmers to extend sugar-cane cultivation the State undertook to receive a smaller share of the land revenue when it was paid partly in kind, during the early years of Bhagvat Sinhjee's rule. Later when the system was done away with, the rate was reduced, particularly when sugar-cane was grown as a second crop on the same land in the same season. As the result of these concessions the area devoted to it is larger than it was in 1884.

The ground (or monkey) nut has also proved, on test, to be a valuable crop. The return yielded leaves a good margin of profit even after provision has been made for fertilizer to recoup the soil it exhausts. In addition to its value from the sales point of view, it tears up the soil and extracts nitrogen from the air. It moreover stands up against sand blast and rats do not eat it. It is, in consequence, becoming popular with the peasants.

Attention has also been paid to improving the cereals grown in the State. At first seeds of the finest varieties were purchased and given gratis to respectable *patels* and cultivators who undertook to sow them and save all the first year's crop to serve as seed for the following year. Later, when new strains were developed, a *kunbi* who had specialized in agriculture was sent from village to village to persuade his cultivator-brethren to adopt them and to advise them on other subjects.

Fertilizers of various kinds were used with a view to determining the varieties that would best suit Gondal requirements. Religious scruples prevented farmers from utilizing bone-meal to any great extent; but they readily adopted the pit-manure system, dung and general refuse being used to regenerate the soil.

Trials were made with ensilage. The cattle took very kindly to the fodder thus preserved. But the conservatism of the peasants stood in the way of the general adoption of the system.

For several years, during the monsoon, two graduates in agriculture employed by the State delivered lectures twice a week in the Gondal library. In addition to persons desirous of learning how to secure a greater yield from their land, senior boys in the schools attended; and prizes were awarded to them for essays on the various topics discussed.

In February, 1895, an agricultural show was opened by Captain G. B. O'Donnell, the Assistant Political Agent in charge of the Halar Prant. Nearly 5,000 exhibits were on view. They included implements, seeds and grains, vegetables, fruits, flowers and flowering plants, pulses, oilseeds, fibres, dairy products of all kinds, cattle foods and manures, cows, bullocks, buffaloes, camels, goats, sheep, horses, donkeys and ponies. Many of them were sent by persons living in Baroda, Palanpur, Baria, Jamnagar, Morvi, Porbandar, Rajkot and Bilkha and British Indian districts in Gujarat.

The lectures delivered in the course of the four days the exhibition was open covered a wide field. Among the subjects discussed were "cultivation and cultivators;" "the means of improving agriculture;" "cocoanut plantations;" "gardening;" "the protection of fruits;" and "how to incorporate agricultural instruction into the present system of education." A ploughing match attracted a great deal of attention.

Some 25,000 persons, including many well known landlords and officials and over 5,000 cultivators visited the show. Men were barred out one day to enable women who kept *purdah* to visit it. His Highness believed that there could be no progress in any field of activity if women were resolutely opposed to it.

Peasants took this opportunity to present an address to their Ruler thanking him for not forgetting them and confining his boons to "mercantile and other communities." The "right of ownership conceded to us," they declared:

"...will relieve us from a good deal of pecuniary embarrassment and enable us to consolidate our holdings which it will now be our interest to improve with the facilities at our disposal. As there will be none to claim a share in the profit resulting from such improve-

ments, we have every reason to be more careful in husbanding our resources and introducing the cultivation of remunerative crops."

His Highness assured his "dear ryots" that ever since he had assumed charge of the State it had been his constant care to ameliorate their condition, for he verily believed that in the cultivators' prosperity lay the prosperity of the State. "In an agricultural country like ours," he said, "the condition of the husbandmen is a fair index to the condition of the whole nation." Through their labour the soil yielded "cereals which the *Mahabharata* calls the best wealth." He pledged his word that he would always endeavour to make them "happy and prosperous."

About six months earlier an Agricultural Association had been organized. As in Britain, it was designed to "give a general stimulus to agriculture, to encourage and further the cultivation of waste land in the State, to improve the breed of cattle and to develop the art of cultivation." Any person who took "an intelligent interest in matters appertaining to the tillage of the soil" was welcomed as a member.

The Association consisted of 50 members, among them seven State officials, 16 agricultural officers from other States in Kathiawar, seven land-holders and 20 *patels*. The Revenue Commissioner presided over it and the Superintendent of agriculture acted as Secretary. It held two meetings a year—one in April and another in November—at which practical subjects came up for discussion, such as the abolition of State dues on fruit trees and trees in general standing in fields occupied by cultivators; the storage of fodder; the extension of linseed cultivation; the construction of dams across the fields so as to prevent soil erosion and so that rain-water may soak more perfectly into the earth and thus benefit the crop; the

modification of village sanitation rules to provide greater facilities for the collection of manure on a large scale; and encouraging cultivators to sink wells on their farms.

Ever ready to help, His Highness remitted the taxation on trees and directed the Revenue Department to carry out the suggestions of the Association in respect of village sanitation. He also ordered reclamation of land in various places.

The movement was, however, ahead of the times. It could not withstand the shock of the calamities that befell the State, beginning with 1899.

The assistance extended to the ryots to enable them to sink wells has resulted in almost quadrupling the number. In 1884 there were only 2,795. In 1914-15, at the time of His Highness' 51st birthday, they had increased to 5,763. In 1934 they numbered 7,904.

Agricultural implements show some improvement over those employed at the time of Bhagvat Singhjee's investiture. City and village refuse finds its way into the farmer's manure pit, there to be turned into fertilizer, which he has learnt to look at in terms of increased yield and therefore a higher income from his land.

Much of the money that naturally flows into the peasants' pockets as the result of improvement all along the line is put back into their holdings. More manure is collected or purchased to feed the land. Wells are dug and channels made to carry the water to distant parts of the holding. Fields are fenced. Bunds are raised to prevent scouring of the soil. Better seed is sown.

Many stories are current in Gondal to illustrate the prosperity of the cultivators. It is related, for instance, that once when the Ruler was driving in the outskirts of a village he came upon a group

of youths out for a picnic and asked them what they were doing. One of them merrily replied that in the olden days farmer boys went about with their pockets filled with berries, whereas now they had their pockets full of money.

On another occasion a number of cultivators from different villages in Kathiawar were travelling together in a railway train. As they were nearing their destination one of them asked another, who was well dressed and intelligent looking, if he was a Gondali. The man, amazed, asked how he had guessed it. The first fellow smilingly replied that his very appearance and speech showed that he could belong to no other State than Gondal.

Two merchants in the Dhoraji Bazaar, it is said, were over-heard discussing the relative conditions of Gondal cultivators and those living in other States. They asserted that though farmers in India, as a class, were usually underfed and poorly clad and had no resources to fall back upon in times of scarcity, cultivators in their State lived in ease and comfort and had savings in the form of gold and silver ornaments which they could dispose of if necessary during hard times.

Towards the end of a visit paid by His Highness to Upleta, the peasants assembled to wish him goodbye and prayed that he would not forget his "golden trees." This allusion related to a famous saying of his great ancestor Bha Kumbhoji, quoted in an earlier chapter. Without a moment's hesitation he replied that nothing would please him more than to see his "golden trees...bear a harvest of pearls."

The acreage of cultivated land has extended, more crops per year are being grown in the irrigated fields and greater yield is secured. Of the alienated

land only 1,485 acres belonged to persons who had not sprung from peasant stock.

It is officially claimed that "Gondal can boast of having more cash-owning peasants and the least number of indebted cultivators per square mile." Seldom does a farmer give up his hereditary occupation and turn to some other means of livelihood.

As soon as a piece of land goes out of cultivation, competitive bids are made for it. It is therefore difficult to find a plot that is cultivable and yet is unoccupied. The area of unoccupied cultivable land has been steadily falling during recent years.

Cotton is exported to Bombay, whence some of it is shipped to England and Japan. English and Japanese firms engage local merchants to act as buyers on a commission basis.

Bajri and *Jowar* form the principal food crops. Wheat comes next. It is grown on irrigated land and is esteemed for its fine baking qualities. Gram, pulses and other cereals follow, raised on small plots. Rice-cultivation is almost entirely confined to a small area immediately round about Gondal. Certain districts specialize in chillies.

The so-called "money-crops" consist of cotton; ground nuts; sugar-cane; castor-seed; *kutki*; linseed; sesamum; chillies; mustard and *methi*. In orchards in the vicinity of towns guavas, lemons, papayas, plantains and pomegranates are grown.

To improve stock premium bulls are kept at convenient centres. All villages are allotted ample pastures. Grass and other fodder are given liberally in times of scarcity.

The pastoral classes keep flocks of sheep and goats. The wool or hair is sold, in a raw state, to contractors, or is spun and woven at home, mostly for family use.

Of recent years the tendency has been growing among cultivators to form co-operative associations. Realizing that strength lies in union, they are evincing a greater interest in helping one another.

In addition to helping to improve economic conditions, co-operative effort is furthering social reform. The marriage age is rising and greater care is being exercised in choosing the bride or groom, as the case may be. Matches between young girls and old men and bargaining for marriage settlements, are falling into disfavour.

Purdah is becoming less rigid. Women are engaging in gainful pursuits to a much greater degree and are helping to swell the family income instead of being helpless burdens.

The villagers are beginning to appreciate the need of improving living conditions. Mud huts are giving place to houses built of stone and it is not unusual to see tiled roofs instead of thatch. The campaign to make the cultivators realize the grave dangers that lurk in overcrowded rooms and contaminated food and drink are beginning to have effect.

CHAPTER XXV

The dawn of Industry

A person who judges the economic well-being of Gondal by setting the value of goods imported into the State against that of the merchandise exported is likely to be misled. The balance of visible trade is seldom in favour of Bhagvat Sinhjee's subjects. So it has been ever since the present economic era began in India.

The currency with which Gondal pays for the imports received is no different from that in which it is paid for the goods it exports. There is therefore no loss or gain on account of exchange to be considered. The balance of payment is nevertheless against Gondal in most years.

The explanation officially made may be reproduced from the Administration Report for 1919-20, when the imports were 80 per cent. in excess of the exports. It read:

"It is obvious that no conclusion of an adverse balance of trade can be based upon this, inasmuch as the export bills negotiated between places with which people here do business, are made out in the same currency. Moreover this phenomenon always persists when the pursuits of a people are more agricultural than industrial.

The Administration Report for 1921-22 contained a similar explanation:

"The figures (Rs. 62,63,199) of imports do not mean that so much was required for consumption and those for exports (Rs. 59,09,708) do not mean so much produce was surplus. Owing to fluctuation in markets the merchants could import and export the same when profitable to do so. Freedom from taxation helped them to store up and dispose of their goods at their convenience.

Neither of these explanations really goes far enough. To form a correct idea of the economic movements it is necessary to take into account the invisible imports.

As has been frequently stressed in the preceding pages, His Highness has pursued a policy of rigid economy ever since he came into power. The expenditure has been kept below the revenue, in normal years. Even during times of pestilence and famine, recourse has not been had to loans floated in or outside the State.

The surpluses that have accrued from this prudent management of the State balances have not been allowed to lie idle in the Treasury, but have been invested in economic undertakings of various descriptions. Mention has been made of the amount—vast for a State only a little more than 1,000 square miles in area—put into the building of railways and the hard work spread over many years to improve the management to provide better service to the public and at the same time to secure a larger yield from the capital. Reference has also been made to the electrical undertakings and similar enterprises which, while affording advantages to the people, bring revenue to the State.

The amount received by the State in the shape of external dividends is an important invisible import which is lost sight of by superficial observers. Enterprising Gondal subjects are moreover carrying on trade in British India including Burma, Indian States and East and South Africa. They remit a portion of their savings to their relatives and dependents, which helps to swell the invisible imports.

It was no easy task to build up the State economic concerns. The early attempts made in that direction proved, in fact, to be unsatisfactory and the concerns had either to be sold, or leased to private agency, or closed.

A factory for ginning cotton was, for instance, established at Dhoraji in 1871. A little later a press was added.

In the eighties the chief manufactures of the State consisted of cotton and woollen cloth, gold embroidery, wood-work turned on the lathe and wooden toys and brass and copper utensils. They were made almost entirely by hand by men possessing skill inherited from many generations of ancestors who had followed the same craft.

On March 31, 1886, there were 835 cotton and 75 wool-weaving hand-loom establishments. The only power-industry was the steam-ginning and cotton cleaning factory already mentioned and a steam cotton press at Dhoraji.

The exports at this time consisted of cotton, yarn, oils, molasses, wool, cereals, hides and skins; and the imports of timber, cotton, woollen and silken cloth, gold, silver and other metals, sugar and ghee. The total volume of foreign trade was small, totalling only 48,482 tons in 1885-86.

A great believer in the exchange of commodities to improve the economic condition of the people,

Bhagvat Sinhjee immediately took in hand the question of building up industries and increasing trade. Choice specimens of Gondal manufactures were sent to Exhibitions. Haji Mahmad, a toy-maker of Dhoraji, was awarded a silver medal at the Calcutta Exhibition.

His Highness confidently expected that the extension of railways would give an impetus to industry. He was happy when, in 1894, a second ginning factory was set up by a private individual at Dhoraji.

A set-back was experienced however through the failure of two banking firms in Gondal. Timely measure taken by the State saved a third establishment from crashing.

Revival of confidence led a company of merchants next year to establish a ginning factory near the railway station at Gondal. Two enterprising copper-smiths set up a foundry. The Workshop buildings were placed at their disposal free of rent for a certain period and every possible facility was given them to make the new industry thrive. Known as the Gondal Iron and Brass Factory, it turned out all kinds of cast-iron work such as ornamental railings, brackets, staircases, garden benches, trunks, teapots and other light articles.

Cotton gins and presses began to appear—one at Gundarra and another at Sultanpur, while an application was made to set up a third at Panaji. A second press was established at Dhoraji and a spinning and weaving mill at Gondal, which, however, was held back owing to slackness in the cotton trade.

All industries came practically to a standstill during the famine as the raw materials could not be had. To stimulate business the Thakore Sahib earmarked Rs.1,00,000 for making loans to persons desirous of starting new undertakings.

It looked at first as if the device would prove effective. Applicants came with cut and dried schemes for starting factories on a small scale. The officials saw the dawn of industrialism breaking over the State and newspapers in British India printed laudatory editorials.

The Ruler however refused to become enthusiastic until he saw substantial results. Much to his disappointment events justified him. A considerable amount of the money borrowed was, it was discovered, used for purposes that did not bear the slightest relation to industry.

Thereafter a more cautious policy of making loans was adopted. Officials were detailed to see to it that the money lent by the State went straight into the building of a new or the expansion or over-hauling of an old industrial establishment and not in liquidating debts already incurred or in buying articles of luxury for the would-be industrialist or his family.

In addition to advancing loans and using other means to encourage industry, His Highness provided technical training for young men interested in such activities. He sent three boys, dyers by caste, to learn modern methods of dyeing and kindred subjects at the Kala-Bhavan (Technical Institute) at Baroda. Each was given a stipend. Young men in receipt of scholarships were also sent to the Railway Workshops at Ghadechi to receive practical training in mechanics.

An experiment in introducing the silk industry was tried in 1909. Worms of the eri species were distributed among the inmates of the Bai Sahib Ba Asylum. At first there was difficulty in obtaining castor leaves for them to feed upon. It was soon conquered: but the worms did not thrive and the experiment had reluctantly to be given up.

An enterprising Memon of Upleta opened, in 1916, a small tanning factory to utilize the opportunities created by the great war.

In 1920 a factory for manufacturing small articles such as nut-crackers, knives, razors and water-taps was established at Gondal.

With the introduction of electricity several factories for milling wheat, weaving cloth, carpet and making ice were opened in Gondal. Some of the existing concerns also took advantage of the cheap power provided by the State.

Among them was a press owned by Kanji Karsanji, to which the State entrusted all the printing work, including the *Darbari Gazette*, founded in November, 1884. Several other presses have since been set up in Gondal, Dhoraji and Upleta.

From only one ginning factory in 1884, Gondal now possesses 8 ginning factories, 4 cotton presses, 1 iron foundry, 3 oil mills, 1 tramway, 12 flour mills, 1 ice factory, 1 carpet factory, 1 soap factory, 2 factories producing cement articles, 1 tannery and a well equipped workshop.

With the establishment of industries there has been a drift of population towards the towns and rise in wages. The great war particularly strengthened this tendency.

CHAPTER XXVI

Medical Relief

1

One day many years ago a visitor, while being conducted through the hospital at Gondal, noticed that all the windows appeared to be open just so much and no more. The mathematical precision was so apparent that he went up to one of them the better to examine it. As he tried to move a sash he found that it was stuck fast. He walked up to another and found it also firmly fixed.

The Medical Officer who was showing him around noticed his surprise and said:

"The windows are all locked. They are kept locked. At this time of the year it gets rather chilly in the early morning and night. Patients are therefore sure to be tempted to shut out the cold by closing the window. In so doing however they exclude the fresh air, so necessary for their recovery. This device, invented by His Highness, prevents them from tampering with the ventilation of the ward."

As would be expected from a Ruler who, despite all difficulties, won the highest degrees in the gift of the Medical Faculty of the Edinburgh University, the Medical Department of the State has received special attention from him. For many years he, in fact, personally supervised its work. When pressure of other

duties compelled him to desist, he placed his second son, Kumar Shree Bhupat Sinhjee, who, following his natural bent towards medicine, had qualified himself as a physician and surgeon, in control of the medical and sanitary services of the State.

Bhupat Sinhjee had been taken to Scotland when he was six or seven years old. He entered Harrow at thirteen. His tutor found him "well equipped in classical and other knowledge and a delightful boy to teach." He had, he stated, "seldom come across so young a boy with such powers of concentration and independent work."

His pupil, he reported a little later, had won the Pupil Room prize easily. "His work both in Latin Prose and in English" had been "beyond praise." He congratulated "the East on its easy victory over the West."

On leaving Harrow Bhupat Sinhjee joined Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took the degree of M.B. Then he studied for the examinations held by the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons in London and was awarded the L.R.C.P. and M.R.C.S. diplomas in 1914. After qualifying for the D.T.M. from the Tropical School of Medicine he returned to Gondal in 1919 and on the retirement of Dr. Hari Bhicaji was appointed the Chief Medical Officer of the State.

2

In the early years of Bhagvat Sinhjee's regime, when there were only two medical institutions in the State—one at Gondal and the other at Dhoraji—he set up a dispensary on wheels. Placing it in charge of a qualified doctor, he sent it from village to village. In addition to providing medical relief to farmers and handicraftsmen at their very doors, it helped

to inspire in the people faith in the Western system of medicine.

In the meantime, action was being taken to improve and to extend the hospitals at Gondal and Dhoraji and to open hospitals and dispensaries in other centres. Concurrently effort was made to safeguard health by improving the sanitation of towns and villages by paying increased attention to vaccination against smallpox and later inoculation against bubonic plague; and perfecting the organization for collecting and tabulating vital statistics.

In the course of a few years the Gondal hospital was transformed. In 1906 Sir Alexander Simpson, Emeritus Professor of Midwifery at the University of Edinburgh, was so pleased with his tour of inspection, that he expressed himself as delighted to find in such an out of the way place as Kathiawar "such a well-constructed and well-equipped hospital." Its "fine airy wards and clean comfortable beds," he declared, invited "the entrance of the sick and suffering who... get all attention and skilful treatment."

Two years later Sir Thomas R. Fraser, when touring India as Chairman of the Indian Plague Commission, praised the well-equipped operating theatre and medical, surgical and lying-in wards of the same hospital.

In addition to providing gratuitous medical relief to persons in and near the capital, the Gondal Hospital is used as a centre for training *dais* (midwives). Pupil nurses in receipt of scholarships from the Victoria Scholarship Fund, to which the State has generously contributed, are trained yearly in such work. It is hoped that in time women qualified to handle cases of childbirth will be available all over the State in place of the midwives who work by the rule of thumb and, through lack of knowledge of the most

elementary principles of hygiene and through neglect, contribute so largely to puerperal diseases and infant mortality. The interests of both the present and the future generations will thus be safeguarded.

3

The hospital at Dhoraji, the foundation-stone of which was laid a few months after Bhagvat Sinhjee's investiture, has been developed with similar care and serves the medical needs of the people of that town and its environs with efficiency. Lying between the old city within the ramparts and the newly opened "Extension," it is a popular institution.

The wealthy among the Dhoraji citizens have been liberal in subscribing funds for establishing and maintaining medical institutions. Two private hospitals, built and endowed by the Muslim merchants for the care of women and children, were opened in 1915 in commemoration of Bhagvat Sinhjee's 51st birthday. The name of Her Highness the Rani Sahiba is associated with one (the Nandkunverba Zenana Hospital) while the other is known as the Islamia Zenana Hospital.

Sheth Popatbhai Nemchand, a Hindu business man of Dhoraji, built a hospital known as the Dasha Shrimali Vanik Davakhana. Another, known as "the Muslim Charitable Dispensary," was also erected.

The State has opened hospitals at Upleta and Bhayavadar and dispensaries at Gondal, Bhayavadar, Sarsai and Jetalsar. They are staffed with qualified doctors and trained nurses. A periodical examination of the subordinate establishment by the Chief Medical Officer ensures the efficiency of the department.

Such a good name have the hospitals in the State borne from the earliest days that patients flock to them from outside. They are freely admitted and

everything in the power of the doctors and nurses is done to restore them to health.

4

The emphasis laid upon the Western system of medicine by the Medical Department has not completely destroyed the people's faith in Ayur Veda. An Ayurvedic Medical Hall and Dispensary exist at Gondal. The proprietor Vaidya Jivaram Kalidas, who bears the title of Raj-Vaidya is learned in the medical lore of old. He conducts, from a press of his own, a monthly journal devoted to medicine and sanitation. Vaidas are available in other towns and in some of the larger villages of the State.

Medical facilities are indeed so liberally provided that it is estimated that there is, one institution for every 15,000 persons and 93 square miles. In Bombay, on the other hand (including non-Kathiawar Indian States) one institution has to cope, with medical requirements of more than 30,000 persons, who have to travel on the average 160 miles to be treated for their ailments.

5

The efficiency of the Medical Department was put to a severe test during the trying times described in Chapter XVII. But for the measures it employed to meet the emergency, the death roll would have been much longer.

The precautions taken against keeping out infection were so effective that, though the bubonic plague was raging in the Bombay Presidency, Gondal enjoyed immunity from it for several years. Even when, in 1902, that epidemic invaded the State, the mortality was kept down by the energetic campaign immediately inaugurated.

Temporary camps were constructed outside the towns for lodging people from the affected parts of the urban area. They were loath to leave their homes and live in temporary shelters. But the medical staff explained to them the necessity for such evacuation and the townsfolk yielded with as good grace as they could command.

Inoculation, too, was unpopular. The medical staff appealed to the people in the name of the Thakore Sahib not to imperil the lives of others; and in a comparatively short time the outbreak of plague was brought under control.

The influenza scourge that broke out in India and other countries in October, 1918, taxed the energies of the Medical Department even more than the bubonic plague. Charitably inclined traders opened temporary dispensaries to supplement the State institutions. Despite all care, 9,147 persons were carried off by this fell disease within six weeks.

The improvement made in the supply of drinking water in Gondal and other towns has greatly decreased cholera mortality. When the village reconstruction scheme (already described) has been put through and full precautions have been taken to protect the supply of drinking water in rural areas, the incidence will decrease further.

6

As the system of vaccination has been developed and perfected, smallpox has ceased to be the scourge that it was during Bhagvat Sinhjee's boyhood. Control over vaccination was not surrendered to him by the Political Agency until 1896.

Superstition and the *purdah* system among certain classes impeded the work in the early years. People objected particularly to the taking of lymph from arm

to arm. Where persuasion failed, compulsion had to be resorted to, under the provisions of a far-reaching Act passed by His Highness.

Education has mended matters to a great extent. The substitution of glycerinated lymph in place of the old arm-to-arm lymph has removed a fruitful cause of trouble.

Curious to relate, most persons bitten by rabid dogs refuse to receive anti-rabic treatment. They prefer to go to a *athanak* (sacred place) of Vachhra Dada living in Vachhra, a small village near Gondal who, by reciting incantations, it is stated, is able to save 90 per cent. of the cases that are brought to him.

7

Side by side with the augmentation of facilities for the cure of diseases, the fight to rid the State of conditions that breed disease has been intensified. The work of improving sanitation throughout the State was entrusted to a special department.

Officials belonging to the various departments are bidden, when on tour, to be on the look-out for insanitary spots, so that they may be removed. They are also asked to use their personal influence to bring about improvement through local effort.

Attempts have been made to use the children in school as instruments for disseminating knowledge relating to personal and village hygiene and fighting epidemics.

Whether this educational campaign has converted many grown-up persons may be doubted. They look upon epidemics as visitations from the gods and goddesses and consider them therefore to be incapable of yielding to medical treatment.

The educational campaign has however turned the thoughts of the rising generation towards sanitation. They have learnt how to act, of themselves, if unfortunately attacked by any infectious disease, or at least refrain from attending school or coming in contact with other boys and girls until they have fully recovered. In consequence of the active work for the protection of the health of the Gondal people, the death rate, as might be expected, has fallen considerably.



CHAPTER XXVII

The Fiftieth Milestone

1

In the Hindu estimation the day a person is born—and not the day he has entered his second year—is his first birthday. Bhagvat Singhjee therefore reached his 51st milestone on October 24, 1915. Even though it occurred only six years after the Jubilee celebrations, when loyalty had found enthusiastic expression, and when the most devastating war in human annals was raging, affecting people all over the globe, preparations were made on a large scale to organize suitable festivities.

If the Thakore Sahib could have had his way, his birthday would have gone unobserved. While in Simla, early in July, 1915, he heard that at public meetings held in his State it had been decided that the event should be celebrated in a befitting manner. He immediately telegraphed requesting that in view of the war and scarcity then prevailing, the Gondlis should at least defer the programme, if they were unwilling to abandon it altogether.

Their love for their Ruler was too great to permit them to pay heed to this message. Neither the extraordinary demands made by the great war nor menacing famine—not even the knowledge that His Highness had a deep-rooted dislike for *tamashas*—could influence them to modify their plans.

Bhagvat Sinhjee therefore had no option but to accept the proffered invitations. He gracefully capitulated, placing himself completely at the disposal of his people. Committees were thereupon appointed to draw up programmes and subscription lists were opened in every town and village.

2

The celebrations really began on October 23 the day preceding His Highness' birthday, with the distribution of prizes to the pupils of the Sagramjee High School and the Taluka School. After speeches had been delivered in the Grasia College Hall, giving an account of educational work for the past year and presenting an outline of the history of the Vernacular School founded in 1859, students of the High School went through an elaborate programme of English, Sanskrit and Gujarati recitations. The Thakore Sahib distributed the prizes.

Later that evening Their Highnesses drove through the streets of the capital to admire the illuminations. The carriage was stopped outside the residence of Dr. Hari Bhicaji, the Chief Medical Officer, and his little six-year-old daughter placed a dot of *kum-kum* (vermillion) on the forehead of each of the occupants, waved before them a tray with tiny lights burning on it (*arti*), gracefully made obeisance and presented them with *attar* and *pan*. They then proceeded to the house of the State Vakil, where a garden party was given in their honour.

An Extraordinary *Durbari Gazette* published at noon announced the following boons:

(a) A present of Rs.10,000 to each member of His Highness' family over the age of 15 whose allowance had not been fixed.

(b) Remission of outstanding *shadi* (marriage) and *gami* (death) dues from *Bhayats*, *Mulgrasias*, *Jivaidars*, *pasaitas* and others.

(c) The grant of half a month's salary to all public servants.

(d) The re-instatement of officials who had been degraded.

(e) Remission of *Talbana* (fine for detention of official papers) arrears from the State servants.

(f) Remission of debts from *Jivaidars* prior to *Samvat* 1900.

(g) Remission of outstanding accounts due from *Jivaidar* Meruji Ladhaji of Vekri.

(h) Remission of dues on account of *tagavi* (loans to agriculturists) share leviable from *Jivaidars* of Nani Vavdi under Upleta.

(i) Remission of 25 *per cent.* of land assessment outstanding at the end of the preceding year.

(j) Limiting the liability of mortgagees of *vighoti* land to the extent of the amount mortgaged.

(k) Grant of one month's allowance to religious endowments.

(l) Gift of a suit of clothes to each inmate of the Bai Sahib Ba Asylum and the Bhagvat Sinhjee Orphanage.

(m) Donation of Rs.1,000 to the Yateem Khana (Orphanage), Dhoraji.

(n) Contribution of Rs.1,000 to the Sheth Panachand Naranji Modi Veterinary Hospital, Gondal.

(o) Remission of grazing fees throughout the State.

(p) The rate of compensation for land acquired by municipalities to be fixed at double the price settled for the locality.

(q) Present of books prescribed for the next higher class to pupils of all schools in the State.

(r) A scholarship of Rs.7 a month to the daughter of the deceased ranger Lalchand Rugnath.

(s) Five prisoners to be released and all others to be given a remission of one day per month of the term of their sentences.

Next day the town presented a gay panorama of flags, arches, festoons, boards bearing eulogistic inscriptions and other marks of holidaying. Prayers were offered in the temples and mosques, sweets were distributed to the children and fodder to cattle; and large numbers of poor persons were feasted.

At 10 a.m. a procession consisting of representatives of the people and all the distinguished guests started from the Durbargarh and went to the "Huzur Bungalow" to offer birthday greetings. His Highness received them standing on the steps of his residence.

A luncheon party at the home of the Diwan, Mr. R. V. Patwari, followed, after which His Highness visited all the Hindu and Jain temples and mosques. He also went to the homes of several leading residents, who garlanded him and put *kumkum* and rice on his forehead. At the home of the Huzur Secretary, Mr. Pranshanker Joshi, this pretty function was performed by Anasuya, his ten-year-old daughter.

In the afternoon His Highness the Maharaja of Bhavnagar distributed prizes at the Monghiba Girls' School.

After attending a dinner party Their Highnesses went, in the gloaming, to a meeting of the Hatkeshwar community of Nagars specially held in their honour. From there they proceeded from house to house till they reached the southern gate of the Durbargarh, where an entertainment had been arranged by the Khangī Department.

3

The principal function of the day took place at 7-30 p.m. in the palace court yard of the Durbargarh, where a vast concourse of people had gathered. His Highness was met at the entrance by representative citizens and conducted to the dais, amidst vociferous and long continued applause. When the distinguished guests, the principal officials, *Bhayats* and others were seated, a song of welcome, specially composed for the celebration, was recited.

The Address, read by the aged ex-Minister Khan Bahadur Bezonji Merwanji, expressed the people's heartfelt and sincere congratulations on the auspicious occasion of His Highness completing his 50th year and prayed to the Almighty to spare him to receive "the united good wishes" of his "happy and contented subjects for many years to come." It proceeded:

"We have always been eager to express our sense of gratefulness for the immense good conferred upon us, since Your Highness took into your hands the reins of government and no better opportunity could have offered itself than this—the completion of 50 years of life solely devoted to the welfare of the subjects committed to your care by a wise Providence.

"It is within the recollection of all that the promises made at the inauguration of Your Highness' rule for the preservation of justice and order in the State, the protection of the lives and property of the subjects, the care of the cultivators, the development of trade, the provision of roads and means of communication, the spread of education, and for the relief of the sick poor have been more than fulfilled by Your Highness."

Examining the statistics of the preceding years, the Address noted "all-round progress, consolidation,

and liberality in the various departments of State."

Special mention was made of the "unique fact" of the Thakore Sahib "having abolished all import and export dues in the State." A boon of this kind had not been conferred, so far as they knew, by "any prince either in the East or the West.

Mr. Pransbankar Joshi read a Gujarati translation of the Address. Printed in gold on mauve satin it was then placed in a beautiful gold casket of local workmanship and formally presented to His Highness.

The Thakore Sahib did not make a long speech in replying to the Address, but every word that fell from his lips expressed his love for his "People of Dear Gondal." He said:

"To my mind the greatest happiness is to be found in the knowledge of having done one's best to discharge one's duty. Next to that comes the happiness derived from appreciation of one's efforts by the people in whose interests the efforts are made. That you have made mine by the generous terms of the Address and the enthusiasm with which you have celebrated this anniversary. My happiness would indeed be complete if I could feel that my administration was as free from defects as your Address would appear to suggest. I pray that I may be able to continue to serve the cause you and I have nearest to our hearts, the cause to which I have dedicated my life—I mean the advancement of Gondal."

4

Several congratulatory speeches followed. Sir Prabhashankar Pattani, who had risen from humble beginnings to be the Chief Minister of His Highness the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, stated that Gondlis had "no idea of the respect and admiration which other

Chiefs and...humble individuals" like himself who had "come in contact with him in the transaction of political and other business" entertained for His Highness. His qualities as a man made him

"...respected even more than his qualities as a Chief. Take, for instance, his readiness to correct his opinion. Even a petty officer would hesitate when caught in a mistake to confess himself in the wrong. His Highness' love of truth and right however enables him to make such a confession, on the very rare occasions on which it may be necessary, without the slightest hesitation and all those who have to work with him admire him all the more for it, although for most of us it can only be admiration at a distance as there are few, very few indeed, who can imitate His Highness in this trait.

"His Highness as we all know is a wealthy man even amongst Chiefs. But how has that wealth been piled up? Still more, how is that wealth being used? The whole secret lies in his extremely simple mode of life and a life-long devotion to your welfare."

Mr. Abdul Sattar Tabani gave expression to the sentiments entertained by the Muslims of the State for their Hindu Ruler. His people were, he said, so much indebted to him that words failed to describe the debt of gratitude they owed him. They received "equal and equitable justice" at his hands.

He was the champion and advocate of education. "Like Augustus, the great Roman Emperor, he strained every nerve to re-plan the Gondal town on medical and hygienic principles," which they all appreciated. He had "established orphanages for the blind, the infirm and the destitute" and had "conferred special favours and benefits upon the agriculturists by the

construction of irrigation works and timely remissions." The poor and the rich had free access to him and they greatly admired his quality of abstemiousness.

The ceremony of presenting the Address concluded with the recitation of poems in Sanskrit, Gujarati and Hindi by their authors.

5

A large evening party was held in the Durbargarh square. At 10-45 p.m. a torch-light procession, headed by the band and State paraphernalia, marched from that place to the "Huzur Bungalow." As the carriage containing Their Highnesses proceeded the streets resounded with cries of "*Jaya! Jaya!*" It was stopped at nearly every door and the people gave him *pan gulab*, garlanded him and showered flowers upon him. Once in awhile the owner of a house would beseech him to step inside—a request that he never refused. He even acceded to the wish of a peon thus to honour his dwelling and receive his homage.

Near the Veri Gate the procession halted for a time. The outlines of the old Customs House, no longer needed for the purpose since all such dues had been done away with, picked out with thousands of tiny oil lamps.

A sumptuous supper was served in a large *shamiana* profusely decorated and ablaze with lights. People surging in the open space in front of it like a heaving sea of humanity, watched the magnificent fireworks that were let off.

After *pan supari* and garlanding, the procession was reformed and resumed its course. Slowly it wended its way to the "Huzur Bungalow," reaching it at dawn on the morning of the 25th. By that time the floral offerings were so heaped around Bhagvat Sinhjee that it was almost impossible to see him as he sat in the carriage.

Later that day the Maharaja of Bhavnagar opened the Panachand Naranji Veterinary Hospital by turning a silver key in a silver lock. It had been built through the generosity of the two widows of that gentleman.

A little later Bhagvat Singhjee distributed prizes at the Madressa founded by Sheth Yakub Abdulgani of Gondal, at the time trading in Burma. From there he went to an exhibition of specimens of work done at the Arts School, including some statues and busts sculptured by the Princesses Bakunverba and Leilaba.

The Diwan gave an evening party at his bungalow at 7-30 p.m., followed by a banquet.

6

On the 26th His Highness, the Rajkumaris and the principal officials drove to the Gondal Station to go to the districts. To their great surprise they found awaiting them a special train that had been converted into a bower of greenery and blossoms. The work of decoration had been done so secretly that with the exception of a few railway employees, no one knew anything about it.

When the train reached Jetalsar Junction another surprise was in store for its occupants. During the night the station had been transformed as if a wizard had touched it with his magic wand. It was surrounded by a lovely garden that had not been there the day before. The passage had been enclosed all round and red and white lights had been placed so as to give it the appearance of a tunnel leading to what looked like a subterranean chamber. The manager conducted Their Highnesses to gold and silver chairs placed on a dais fashioned in imitation of a saloon and presented to them the officers of the railway and the principal members of the staff.

The train arrived at Dhoraji at 9-30 p.m.. A seething mass of people all a-twitter with excitement, dressed in gala array and in a festival mood, packed the platform.

A deputation representing all classes led His Highness to a specially built *pandal* crowded to its utmost capacity with men, women and children from the town and near-by villages, who hailed him with affectionate greetings. The Address read on behalf of the Dhoraji citizens expressed gratitude to His Highness for his "intense love towards all his subjects, the most glorious observance and dispensation of justice and the indefatigable labour and constant endeavour to help their progress and to minister to all their wants and provide means for their happiness." It continued:

"We have been cherishing with pleasant memory the precious words expressed by Your Highness when you assumed the reins of government and regarding them as boons and charters of our future rise and prosperity. Your Highness has already fulfilled those promises and we respectfully beg to congratulate Your Highness on the complete success of your rule and on the fulfilment of your promises."

The prosperity of a State, it was said, depended mostly on agriculture and he had devised the most effective means to ensure their safety from famine by opening large irrigation works and granting loans and remitting the immense sum of Rs. 22,00,000 on account of *vighoti* during his reign of 30 years.

The prosperity of other classes depended largely upon trade. He had set an excellent example to his brother Rulers by abolishing the octroi duties throughout the State and providing well built roads for traffic and the exchange of goods. The roads in his State

were the best in Kathiawar and were kept in excellent condition.

The "rare combination of wealth and learning" had been most conspicuous in his personality. What wonder that he should be eager to "spread the ray of knowledge even in the remotest corners" of the State.

"We have achieved much progress under Your Highness' reign," the Address declared, "and with Your Highness' help we can confidently hope to reach the highest prosperity."

Replying in a speech vibrant with emotion, the Thakore Sahib referred to the people present as "Fellow Natives of Dhoraji." That phrase captured their hearts and bound them to him with hoops of love stronger than steel.

He had, he said, been anxious to know what the people of his native town thought of his work when the good people of Gondal were scrutinizing with a magnifying glass the results of 30 years of his administration. The Address that had just been read had disclosed that they possessed "a memory over-retentive of every good action, however trivial, yet absolutely oblivious of all failings and shortcomings."

"A single warm heart acting in concert with such memory could convert even foes into friends. What such then must be the effect of thousands of hearts so acting on the mind of one who has made your interests his interests, your happiness his happiness and your troubles his troubles? The answer I leave to your imagination since it is beyond me to describe my feelings at this moment."

He thanked them for wishing him long life and happiness and said:

"But life be it long or be it short, can have no value for me unless I can be of use to my people. I earnestly pray therefore that it may be in my power, in however small a way, to help you, makers of Dhoraji, to take your place not only amongst the great merchants of Kathiawar and of India but also amongst the merchant princes of the world."

Their Highnesses remained for two days in Dhoraji. Every waking hour was filled with one function or another, as the l  te days at Gondal had been. There were garden parties, prize distributions, opening ceremonies, dinner parties and a torch-light procession.

7

On the 27th inst. they went to the little village of Patanvav, nestling at the foot of the Osham Hill. Many cultivators, traders and school children had gathered there from the neighbouring villages of Meli, Kalana, Chichod and Chhatrasa. A *mandap* had been erected in a central spot and there the Ruler was welcomed by a joyous concourse.

From that place he drove to Moti Marad, a prosperous village not far distant. Villagers surrounded the carriage when it arrived at the gateway and marched along with it, stumbling over obstacles and over each other in their eagerness to be near their best friend, as they regarded Bhagvat Sinhjee.

The formal function of welcoming him was held in a *mandap* specially constructed for the occasion. After school children had sung songs and recited selections, luncheon was served. To humour the people, the meal was eaten in the orthodox Hindu fashion. Table-cloths, knives, forks and spoons were not employed.

On the return journey to Dhoraji the Thakore Sahib and his daughters halted at Pipalia. As they alighted from the motor car they were welcomed by women carrying water-pots on their heads. Seated on *gadi takyas* (divans) under a canopy made entirely of products of the village, they received the warm congratulations of the people of the country-side.

The special train conveyed the Royal Family that night to Upleta. Owing to the lateness of the hour the formal reception took place the next morning, when the leading members of the *mahajan* and *jamat* went to the station to welcome His Highness and to conduct them to the *mandap*. They were met at the gate of the town by a large crowd led by four little girls who applied *tum tum* to Bhagvat Singhjee's forehead and sprinkled rose petals on him.

In the Address the citizens gratefully referred to the fact that His Highness had refrained steadfastly from using his people's money for his own pleasures and had devoted it to promoting their happiness and securing their advancement. They declared:

"You have bestowed upon us, your children, an unheard-of boon by doing away with customs duty which was a source of great inconvenience and hardship to travellers inasmuch as it gave customs officers' clerks opportunities of causing unnecessary trouble and even of insulting the poor and wearied people going from one place to another. Besides this lasting boon is bound to give an impetus to trade. So far as we know, you are the only Ruling Chief who, after defraying the expenditure of the administration, has been able to make a good saving and utilize it in remitting all sorts of taxes.

They thanked him for providing good roads, thereby "saving hardship to the people and the beasts

of burden;" for his liberal policy during famine and lean years and for his efforts to uplift the nation by advancing education among girls and women. They continued:

"It is Your Highness' firm belief that the savings in the State Treasury lawfully belong to the people and not to yourself personally, that they should be treated as a sacred trust and invested in such concerns and places as are quite safe and sound. But for such foresight and acumen on Your Highness' part we should never have been free from taxes like import and export duties."

They were happy that he had adhered "to the traditions of the East in dress and manners inspite of a long stay in England and in the face of Western education." His "powerful intellect" had "carefully sifted the grain from the chaff" of Western civilization. He had furnished them "with the living example of all that a man with high attainments of head and heart" could be; "and of what a man, following the noble principle of action without caring for reward, directed by the *Gita*, should be." In conclusion they declared that:

"If we possess anything of value that we can lay at Your Highness' feet it is our sincere and heartfelt good wishes and we humbly present them to you with all our heart."

Bhagvat Sinhjee was deeply stirred. "For conveying one's sentiments to people as loving as they are loved," he said, there was "another and better means than articulate language." He therefore proposed to "let the heart speak to the heart."

In the course of his progress through the town His Highness again and again left the carriage to accept the hospitality of the citizens. In so doing he

made no distinction between the rich and the poor, Hindu or Muslim.

8

The peasants of Nava Para had, in the meantime, been busy building a *mandap* for receiving their Ruler. They draped the framework with *torans* (door decorative arches) and *chakras* of *kaabi* workmanship, rich in colouring and decorated with tiny mirrors held in place by embroidery.

As soon as His Highness and Princesses had occupied seats on a raised platform the head of the community read a novel Address. It consisted of 50 questions—one for each year of the Thakore Sahib's life. As soon as he would put a query the *patels* would reply to it in one voice and the reply would extol some virtue of His Highness. At the close of the ceremony the *kaabis* performed a semi-religious dance.

After a visit to Kolbi the next day the party returned to Upieta in time to take the train for Bhayavadar at 3 p.m., reaching that place an hour later. The people had refused to wait for the formal welcome and surrounded the saloon in a mass as soon as it came to a halt.

At the entrance to the town an arch covered with plain red cloth bore the inscription: "In You We Trust." After a formal reception the temples were visited.

The day ended with a torch-light procession which was joined, at every street intersection, by bands of women singing traditional songs. A *rues* was performed before the people dispersed.

* Next morning—October 30—found His Highness at Moti Paneli. Here the procession was headed by a band of *bherwads* intoning a weird chant as they marched along. At the request of the *dheds* (one of

the submerged classes) His Highness drove to the *Dhedanda* (the quarter of the town in which they lived) which had been specially decorated in anticipation of the event.

Seventeen days later celebrations were held in Khokhri. His Highness was met about two miles from the village and was followed from there by a long procession of carts filled with women dressed in holiday attire singing songs of welcome and drawn by fine, richly caparisoned bullocks, the bells round their necks jingling musically as they trotted.

Near the gateway of the village the procession was met by girls carrying on their heads earthen pots in which corn was sprouting, symbolical of plenty. Four of these girls went up to the carriage and put *kum-kums* on the foreheads of the occupants and threw rice over them.

The procession then proceeded to the Durbargarh. At its head was carried a standard inscribed with the words: "Our welfare is your goal." Another motto read: "Who is the first in the world to abolish customs duties? Bhagvat Sinhjee, the Ruler of Gondal. Bravo, Maharaja, Bravo!" A third ran: "I owe my rise to thee." A fourth bore the words: "We are proud to be your subjects."

An Address was presented in a *mandap* erected in the Durbargarh. There was a night procession through illuminated streets and finally a dinner given by the people in the moonlight.

Visits followed, on different days, to the villages of Bilala, Ribda, Rib, Sultanpur, Ghoghavadar, Bandhia, Shemla, Gundala, Anida, Kolithad, Rupavati, Moviya, Patidad, Charakhdi, Vekri, Vavdi, Derdi, Pat Khilori, Ravna, Vasavad and Gomta. In most of these places the *mandaps* were decorated with the handiwork of the women, rich in colouring and varied in design.

Incidents occurred adding a touch of novelty to the programme. In one village a little girl waved a brass vessel full of water over His Highness, symbolic of collecting all the evils threatening him, which would be poured out along with the liquid. In another, as the *patel* walked backward all the way, he sprinkled *gulal* (red powder) on the road.

At one Kathi *Grasia's* house the little daughter of the family offered His Highness beads in welcoming him instead of the usual gold and silver flowers. In so doing she indicated that her family was prepared to make the greatest sacrifice for their liege lord. The beads, to them, represented pearls of great price.

At one point men from a neighbouring village insisted upon taking the horses from the thills and drawing the carriage all the way to their settlement, the Thakore Sahib's remonstrances being over-borne. When it reached the village it was met by a string of bullock carts a mile long.

In another town the hostess washed Bhagvat Sinhjee's feet with milk.

At Derdi an old *patel* who had seen three generations of Rulers of Gondal went almost insane with joy, while a lady was so overcome by her emotions that she kept on singing throughout the reading of the Address.

Some persons strewed flowers on the path His Highness was to take. Others spread a cloth of gold for him to walk upon. One of his hosts sprinkled some red powder on the floor and asked him to walk on it, so that he might preserve the powder as a precious memento.

If a village possessed any relics of the past they were proudly shown to His Highness. In one place, for instance, there was a ridge-pole that had been

brought back as a trophy by an expedition sent, decades earlier, to a large Kathiawar State. Sometimes the trumpets used in welcoming him were of ancient pattern, enormous in length and curiously shaped.

The delighted cultivators showed him their wells, their cattle, their gardens and their fruit trees, like little children displaying their playthings. He examined them all with grave interest.

While entering Pat Khilori His Highness noticed that a number of people enfeebled by age or disease were being helped to reach the gate so that they might catch a glimpse of him. He at once felt that there must be something wrong with the place. Upon inquiry he learnt that the village was situated on low, marshy ground and the health of the inhabitants was suffering in consequence. He ordered that the site be vacated and a new settlement established in a healthy spot.

He noted, in one place he visited, that a little ten-year-old boy, the son of the headman of the shepherds, was unusually intelligent. He advised the father to send the child to Gondal to be educated; and the results justified the Thikore Sahib's faith in the little fellow who is now employed in State service.

The celebrations were concluded with a grand garden party given in the Kailas Bagh in Gondal, by the *Bhayats* of Analgad, Vavdi, Panchiavadar, Patiali, Nana Umvada, Mashitala, Mota Umvada and Bhunava.

Education in the State received a great impetus as the result of these festivities. Donations aggregating thousands of rupees were made by public spirited citizens to provide books and slates, prizes and scholarships, to boys and girls attending Hindu, Muslim and State-conducted schools.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Forcing the pace of literacy

1

The more the Thakore Sahib surveyed educational conditions in Gondal the more he was dissatisfied with them. After he had been in undivided control of the Educational Department for a decade and a half, he had to admit that despite all his efforts only a small percentage of children of school-going age were receiving instruction.

He was particularly unhappy at the rate at which literacy was spreading among women. The number of girls attending school compared with boys was much smaller. Unless he could alter that fact the great disparity existing between the percentage of literate men and women compared with the total population of either sex would continue.

The educational statistics gathered at the Census taken in 1911 made dismal reading. The percentage of literacy among men—not quite one-tenth—was small enough; but among women it was very much lower—less than two per cent.

Such disparity did not conduce to domestic peace, much less to happiness. Nor was it in the interest of social progress.

That condition, it was true, was not peculiar to Gondal. It prevailed all over Kathiawar and even in other parts of India.

Illiteracy was partly traceable, no doubt, to the institution of *purdah*, which even then was rigidly observed among the higher classes, especially the Rajputs, though for a generation they had seen Her Highness the Rani Sahiba going about unveiled. Women were, moreover, regarded as "the weaker vessel," depending upon men for their sustenance. Since every girl was expected to marry and be supported by her husband's family, schooling was deemed a superfluity.

Their Highnesses had tried hard to dispel such notions. They had sent their own daughters to school—two of them thousands of miles away from home. In the Addresses they delivered at prize distribution ceremonies they took care to emphasize the need for girls' education. Shree Nandkunverba had pointed out again and again that during the golden age India had cultivated and refined women.

The old ideas were however deeply embedded in the people's minds. Years of mature thinking led the Thakore Sahib to the conclusion that something more than setting an example and providing facilities for obtaining knowledge was needed to stimulate education among girls so that in time matters may be evened up between the sexes in respect of literacy.

2

By 1917 his mind was made up. He decided to make education free and compulsory for girls between seven and eleven years: but not for boys.

This decision at first appeared to be astounding. It seemed to be applying compulsion only to one—and that the wrong—sex.

Persons who objected to the innovation thought that education should have been compulsory either for boys and girls, or that if it had to be applied only to one sex, it should have been made compulsory for males and not for females. The arguments ran in that channel firstly because education was viewed only from an economic angle and secondly because that part of India was *purdah*-ridden.

These objections had been anticipated by Bhagvat Sinhjee. He could not however devise any other way for remedying the uneven distribution of education between the two sexes which held back progress in every sphere of life.

The economic argument cut both ways. It was no doubt true that education would improve a young man's earning capacity. It was no less true however that, as society was regulated in Gondal villages, boys acquired an economic value and actually took their places in the economic world long before they had entered their 'teens. For generations untold the farmers had depended upon their sons' labour in agricultural operations. They therefore would be sure to resist any attempt the State might make that would suddenly deprive them of assistance they had come to regard as essential to their existence.

Girls, on the contrary, were not a part of the economic system, to anything like the extent that boys were. They no doubt rendered themselves generally useful at home and sometimes even in the fields: but they could be spared from such tasks relatively with greater ease than could their brothers.

From the "bread-and-butter" point of view, a girl's education had little value in Gondal: but it had a social value that could not be exaggerated. She, in time, would bear children and the children would be under her almost exclusive care during the most

impressionable years of their lives. If she had attended school they would imbibe education as they fed at her breast, or were dandled in her arms, or tugged at her *patti* as she went about performing her daily tasks. To educate a girl therefore meant that a whole family would be uplifted; whereas to send a boy to school might conceivably mean that only a single individual had enjoyed the benefits flowing from the fount of knowledge.

Intimately acquainted as he was with the psychology of his people, Bhagvat Sinhjee was convinced that emphasis laid upon the schooling of girls would have an important reaction upon the education of boys. Brothers would resent being left behind by their sisters in the educational race. Pride would impel the village youth to obtain at least as good a mental equipment as his future wife would possess. If perchance such pride were lacking, a girl who had passed through the portals of a school was not likely to be enthusiastic at the prospect of being tied for life to an unlettered yokel and her outlook upon that subject would tend to influence boys to attend school.

3

Before initiating the experiment the Thakore Sahib instructed his officials to go from house to house—from field to field—and have heart-to-heart talks with the cultivators. They were patiently to listen to all objections that might be raised against the scheme and answer them as convincingly as possible. By gentle suasion opposition was to be disarmed and support secured for making the venture a success.

So zealously and intelligently did the educational officials carry out His Highness' instructions and such confidence in his wisdom and disinterestedness did the people evince, that the results at the end of the

very first year of the experiment startled doubters. Only 891 girls were at school in 1916-17. Twelve months later the number stood at 4,101. It had more than quadrupled in a single year.

Statistics officially gathered in Western India give an indication of the improvement that is being made. In 1925, whereas 3.2 per cent of the female population in Gondal was at school, the percentage for Bombay was only 2.25.

4

Even though the pace of literacy has been visibly quickened, His Highness is not quite happy. Too large a proportion of schoolable children are still not taking advantage of the facilities provided by him. He will be satisfied only when all the girls and boys of school-going age, not disabled through sickness or accident, are actually receiving instruction.

To achieve that end he has, during recent years, taken certain steps. The more important among them are:

(1) The number of schools in all parts of the State have been greatly increased. Already there is one institution of learning serving 4 square miles; and no boy or girl has to walk more than *one* mile from home to go to school. At the present rate of progress soon there will be no village without its own school-house.

(2) The courses of study have been revised. Every subject of doubtful utility has been eliminated. In this way the time to be spent by children in the primary school has been shortened by two years.

The agricultural classes particularly appreciate the beneficence of this reform. Boys are kept away from the fields for a lesser period than had been the case before; and girls finish their studies in good time

for them to enter matrimony, especially in view of the fact that the marriage age is gradually rising.

(3) Care is being taken that the knowledge imparted in the the schools may not estrange the boys and girls passing through them from their hereditary occupation—that they may not acquire the false notion that a clerkship, no matter how petty, in a government office in a town is superior to toil in the field or at the carpenter's bench or the potter's wheel or the blacksmith's forge.

Notions of this kind had shown a tendency to crop up long before control over the educational system passed into the Thakore Sahib's hands and in consequence the trek townwards from the farm and the industrial cottage had begun. To check such tendencies a strong agricultural bias has been given to the educational system, from the lowest to the highest classes.

5

Text books specially compiled for use in the Gondal schools contain matter extolling the charms of Nature and dwelling upon the peace and quiet of the countryside, its simple joys and inexpensive pastimes. The dignity of labour is stressed to accustom the children to work with their hands.

To teach them the elements of agricultural science and to foster in them love for the beautiful and the desire to improve their surroundings, gardening is prescribed as a compulsory subject. Every school-house is set in a plot in which annual and perennial flowers are cultivated by the pupils with the assistance of the teachers.

The climate of Gondal, as already noted, is exceedingly dry. The rainfall is often scant and certainly unreliable. To keep plants alive and thriving therefore involves vigilance and toil.

It is interesting to watch boys and girls taking water from the village well or reservoir to the school garden early in the morning or late in the evening to water the plants.

Each school tries to excel at gardening, all the others in the State. The recipients of the prizes and medals awarded yearly to stimulate interest in the cultivation of flowers and vegetables, are proud of the distinction. The Ruler, moreover, has a habit of paying surprise visits while travelling about the villages; and praise from one who is no more lavish in using words than in spending his people's money delights the hearts of teachers and pupils alike.

6

These activities in the schools are facilitated by the fact that teachers employed in the rural districts are, almost without exception, recruited from the agricultural classes. They have grown up in the countryside, among the very people whose educational needs they are serving. They know everyone and are known to everyone.

Gondal peasants are remarkably independent and would not permit any one among them to give himself airs. Any teacher who might be inclined to be uppish would soon be taught by them to behave himself.

Nor would the *Vidya Adhikari* tolerate such a person on the staff. He constantly impresses upon schoolmasters and schoolmistresses the need and advisability of making themselves entirely *en rapport* with the parents of children of school-going age. They are urged to cultivate local pride, to share in the joys and sorrows of the cultivators and artisans, to interest themselves in schemes for the benefit of the rural area and thereby win the confidence of the

people they serve. The Ruler himself has set a commendable example of accessibility and courtesy to the humblest of the humble.

The intensive training in pedagogy the teachers receive at the *Adhyapan Mandir* (Training College) in Gondal imbues them with the spirit of service. The head of that institution (Mr. Bahecherlal Patel) is a cultivator by caste. He has grown grey in the educational service of the State. Through his hands have passed several generations of Gondal citizens. A scholar and a poet, steeped in the old traditions, he is wishful to restore India to the golden age and knows that this object can only be accomplished through the instrumentality of the young men who will soon go back to the rural-side to shape the destinies of the men and women of to-morrow.

The *Adhyapan Mandir* has been popular with the teachers ever since it was opened in 1927. They have enthusiastically availed themselves of the opportunities it offered them to obtain professional knowledge and at the same time improve their own intellectual equipment.

The course extends over three years. Lectures are delivered on the various aspects of pedagogy and the pupil teachers are encouraged to study standard works, some of which have been translated into Gujarati. Gold medals are awarded to those who secure the highest marks in teaching, writing and gardening.

This institution was established in the first instance, because the Training College at Rajkot (maintained from funds to which Gondal contributed) could not supply teachers in numbers adequate to the expanding needs of the State. One year the Thakore Sahib asked for 37 teachers, but was given only two.

He insists that the *Adhyapan Mandir* shall turn out teachers in numbers sufficient to fill the educational

requirements of the State. As the result of such foresight, the Education Department never experiences difficulty in starting a school through lack of a trained master or mistress.

To aid teachers in the villages a special set of books—*etar vacan* have been compiled. Officials known as *nircekahakas* visit institutions in the districts, note the difficulties of the teachers, suggest means for overcoming them and give model lessons.

The *Vidya Adhikari* keeps in touch with the latest developments in pedagogy. He studies experiments in the most modern systems of teaching that are being made in the outside world and adopts such as, on test, prove valuable.

7

The Montessori System of teaching the infant through play has, for instance, been yielding gratifying results. There are three *Bal Mandirs* in the State, one each at Gondal, Dhoraji and Upleta. Children ranging in age from two and a half to seven attend them and their bodies and minds are there developed through pleasurable pastime.

The men and women employed in these institutions are in love with their work. They devoted themselves to bringing out the best in each child entrusted to their care with missionary zeal and with specialized knowledge that most parents lack.

The public conscience has become quickened to the extent that these three institutions are conducted by private agency. The *Bal Mandir* at Upleta was founded through the enthusiasm of a few public-spirited men and is maintained by them, with a subsidy given by the Education Department.

In teaching languages, too, modern systems have been adopted. As already stated, instruction is imparted through the "direct method."

CHAPTER XXIX

Fitting Education to Gondal Needs

I

Even when the Thakore Sahib was himself at school, he felt that the text books left much to be desired. They had been written for boys and girls who had inherited different traditions and were being brought up in an entirely different atmosphere. The men who compiled them rarely had any first-hand knowledge of Indian conditions or modes of thought.

He also at that time was of the opinion that the curriculum was unnecessarily heavy. In the concluding pages of his *Journal* he wrote, just as he was returning from his first visit to Europe:

"...Subjects which needlessly tax the energies of the little boys should be done away with. In elementary classes, reading, writing, and arithmetic should receive especial attention. Reading lessons should contain useful information, and short moral precepts in the form of aphorisms. These later on the boys should be required to commit to memory. For the impressions which one receives in infancy are always enduring. The full explanation of the maxims might be reserved till the faculties of the boys are developed. The present series

of school-books, both English and Gujarati, are, in my opinion, ill-adapted to the wants and requirements of the Indian student."

As he grew older and made a deeper study of the needs of his people, he became all the more convinced of the soundness of these ideas, formed though they were before he was out of his 'teens. His innate caution led him however to spend years in maturing schemes for inaugurating reforms.

The elimination of subjects that unnecessarily burdened immature minds was not effected until he had been in undivided control of education for two decades. It not only was a great physical and mental relief for boys and girls, but, as stated in the preceding chapter, shortened the school course by two years.

Though many efforts had been made during the two score years that had elapsed since he had committed to paper his opinion regarding text-books, already quoted, and many successive efforts had been made by various agencies to improve the readers, he was convinced that they still fell far short of his ideal. They were not, moreover, free from the taint of commercialism, being compiled and published by persons who were swayed by economic considerations rather than by the desire to promote the welfare of the children into whose hands the books would be placed. Apart from the psychological effect of this taint, it added to the expense of education.

2

Impelled by these thoughts, His Highness made arrangements in 1926—for the compilation of a set of readers, for use in Gondal schools. The men chosen for the purpose were fully conversant with the predilections and needs of Gondal children and could

therefore provide them with suitable material and graduate that material according to their mental age.

The preparation of these books relieved the Thakore Sahib's subjects of compulsion to pay a perennial tribute to commercial houses outside the State whose text-books were formerly in use. The financial gain resulting from this policy is, in itself, not small. Sold at actual cost price, the Gondal series save the parents of school children at least Rs. 25,000 a year. Not wishing to monopolize this advantage, he has ordered that these books shall be supplied, without a pice in the form of profit, to schools outside the State desirous of using them.

The text-books have been compiled, as already stated, to give an agricultural bias to the minds of the pupils. They also abound in tales culled from the Indian epics and selections from other cultural sources. The child mind thus becomes acquainted with India's rich heritage and insensibly imbibes lofty moral precepts.

The catholicity of the Ruler's mind and his spirit of neighbourliness are reflected in these readers. Nothing that might possibly offend the susceptibilities of any community, much less set one section of the people against another, has been permitted to tarnish their pages. Emphasis is, on the contrary, laid upon the eternal verities common to the various religions.

Effort is made to ensure that the conception of the unity of God should emerge slowly but convincingly from the labyrinth of conflicting doctrines.

Patriotic lays are taught to cultivate local pride.

Songs extolling the beauties of India and her contribution to the progress of mankind are interspersed in the readers with short sketches of great sons and daughters of India. The following composition is a good specimen:

"Thou art veritably the land of the gods,
In beauty thou dost resemble Indra's garden,
I bow unto thee and sing songs in praise of thee.

"Kashmir constitutes thy crest,
Lines of good luck run across thy forehead,
Thy crown bears the motto: 'Be up and doing,'
Thy face is washed by the five rivers of the
Punjab.

"Thy luster shines brightly all over the world.
On thy shoulder rests the shield of the Himalayas
Under which live the sturdy Nepalese and the
Bengalis.

"Around thy neck hangs the chain of seven
streams—

The Ganges, Jumna, Indus, Satlej, etc.
The famous Vindhya forms thy girdle.

"Saurashtra hangs as an emerald pendant at thy
side.

Maharashtra, with her brave past
Monsoon waves rise in the seven seas and form
a silver border to thy sari.

"Golden anklets tinkle on thy feet;
One of them, fallen off, has formed Lanka.
Thou art rich in food-stuffs and cotton.

Thirty-three crores of people acknowledge thy
sway, O Mother!

"O! Mother of manliness, philosophy, devotion
and chivalry.

In thy eyes shine tears of love.
Our hearts are filled with devotion to thee.
Blessed art thou, Mother India!"

Songs sung while performing traditional dances keep girls in tune with the past. These dances are known as *garbas*. Almost as old as India, they were popular in Krishna's time. Tradition has it that in his cowherd days in Brindaban, near Mathura, his

favourite *gopis* (milkmaids) danced in this fashion to the strains of his bamboo lute.

The girls form themselves, indoors or outdoors, as they may choose, into a circle and gracefully sway their bodies to the rhythm of the lilting tune they sing in unison. They may carry earthen, brass or copper pots upon their heads, setting them securely upon little round cushions decorated with tiny, multi-coloured beads. Or they may hold in their hands short, lacquered batons, striking one against the other, keeping time with the music. Or they may weave together bright coloured cords depending from a pole or a ring in the ceiling, just as may-pole dancers do in Europe or America.

Some of the songs that they sing while thus dancing echo the sentiments of the milkmaids of Krishna's day.

3

The teaching of patriotism is untainted by considerations of caste or creed. Dogma of any and every religion is rigidly barred out. The lessons are designed to inspire a feeling of fraternity.

Trade, in which the followers of the Prophet Muhammad dwelling in Gondal largely engage, whets their intelligence. They consequently appreciate the value of education for their children even more than do the Hindus of the farming classes.

The percentage of Muslim children attending school has in consequence, been rising during recent years. It is expected that before long the percentage of literates among the Muslims will not be much lower than among the Hindus, as has so far been the case every decennium when the Census was taken.

Some of the Muslim subjects of His Highness, especially those belonging to Dhoraji, have given generously out of the wealth they have amassed, for establishing and conducting schools. Great stress is laid in these institutions upon the teaching of Urdu (Hindustani) instead of Gujarati—and also upon instruction in Muslim traditions, ethics and doctrinology.

The Hindu Ruler of the State maintains benevolent neutrality towards these institutions. Recognition and grants-in-aid are readily given provided the teaching conforms to the standards laid down by the Education Department.

Unfortunately the eagerness of the majority of Gondal Muslims for education comes to a sudden end as soon as they have learnt to read and write and do simple sums in arithmetic. The boys are promptly taken out of school and set to work in a shop or trading house, usually belonging to some relation.

This custom is rooted in the belief that higher education is not only unnecessary but actually dangerous. It is feared that it may kill the business capacity or turn the mind away from trade.

The Education Department has been carrying on propaganda against these notions. So have the more enlightened among the Gondal Muslims.

Early attempts to impart technical instruction to boys did not prove successful, chiefly owing to the apathy of the parents belonging to the artisan and professional classes. That failure did not however prevent His Highness from making further endeavours in this direction. In January, 1904, an Art School was established and in 1922 a system of training mechanics in the Silver Jubilee Workshops was instituted. The electric sub-stations in various towns are also being utilized for a similar purpose.

Vocational training is insisted upon in all schools. So is physical culture.

5

From the very beginning His Highness has been averse from the employment of costly sporting equipment. His remarks on the subject quoted in his *Journal* will be remembered.

Much has been done to revive Indian games, drill and dances which require little or no apparatus. Some of the teachers are taking keen interest in this revival. The head-master of the Dhoraji High School particularly has encouraged wrestling.

6

The making of improvements in the High Schools has been complicated by the fact that they are affiliated to the Bombay University. Curricula and text-books have therefore to conform to the regulations made by that authority. But for such compliance, Gondal young men and women desirous of obtaining University education at the Fergusson College (where, as has been noted, arrangements to facilitate such education have existed for years), or other colleges affiliated to that University, would have had to contend against serious difficulties.

Not all the boys and girls who attend secondary schools in Gondal intend however to prosecute higher studies. For them the High School is the end of the educational world. It is therefore not necessary for them to appear in the University examinations designed to test the ability to continue their studies in more advanced institutions of learning. For the benefit of such students the School Final or School Leaving Certificate examination is held by the Education Department.

7

Side by side with these reforms, steps have been taken to ensure that the men and women to whom the work of shaping the minds of the future citizens of the State is entrusted shall be competent and contented.

Teachers must possess certain minimum qualifications. To urge them to improve their general intellectual and professional equipment the scale of salaries prescribed is based partly upon qualifications and partly upon length of service.

Salaries of teachers are graded. Increment within defined limits is largely automatic.

The educational budget has been increased from year to year until it amounts to Rs.1,92,788 in 1934—19 times what it was at the end of the minority régime.

This figure does not include the cost incurred upon educational buildings, dealt with in another chapter. According to an estimate made by the Public Works Department, the expenditure incurred on remodelling old and building new schools throughout this period amounted to Rs.1,00,00,000 in 1934.

8

The pages that have gone before contain instances of contributions made by the Thakore Sahib to educational activities outside the State. His donations to the Indian Institute at Oxford, the Fergusson College at Poona and schools maintained for Indian boys and girls in South Africa and Calcutta may be recalled.

One endeavour in a similar direction remains however to be noted. It sprang from his desire to see the young men destined to occupy a position similar to his own equipped with intellectual qualities of the highest order.

Though the proceedings of the conferences held, from time to time, for the improvement of Princes' education, which he was invited to attend, were of a confidential character, it is not difficult to form some idea of the general direction in which his mind must have moved. In his own case he had found that the schooling he had received at the Rajkumar College at Rajkot inadequately prepared him for the tasks that confronted him in life. The emphasis laid upon the acquisition of languages appeared to him somewhat disproportionate to the general need and even more so the time and energy expended upon sports.

Difficulties have increased for the administrators of Indian States during recent decades. At the time of his investiture the people were almost cent per cent. unlettered. Traditions inherited from previous generations made them look upon the Raja as their *Ma-bap* and regard his acts as sacrosanct.

With the inrush of new ideas that unquestioning faith has largely disappeared. Every action taken by an Indian Ruler and even more so every failure upon his part is placed under the microscope. The tendency to criticise, sometimes in language far from polite is increasing.

Other developments have taken place that complicates the work of administration. By little and little the isolation in which a Raja was left to himself has been undermined. Whether he likes it or not, he finds himself drawn into a maelstrom of highly contentious inter-State and inter-provincial questions. He cannot shirk the new obligations that the march of events is imposing upon him without prejudicing the interests of the people committed by Providence to his care.

If a Raja is desirous of discharging his duties with that degree of ease and efficiency which alone

would give him peace of mind, if he is at all conscientious, he must acquire much more than the type of education ordinarily available to Indian Princes. The ability to talk English fluently and correctly and to acquit himself creditably on the cricket field or the polo ground is well enough in its own way. It does not however carry him very far in tackling the internal and external problems that crop up in the course of his administration. Either he has to do as he is told by persons in his employ, or master the science of public administration, know something of history and economics and acquire a wide general knowledge.



CHAPTER XXX

Across the Thorny Tract of Life

1

On October 24, 1925, Bhagvat Sinhjee crossed the furthest boundary of "the thorny tract of life." The sixth decade of a man's existence was so named by the ancient Hindu sages because they had observed that a man encountered many crises after he passed his fiftieth year; and if, despite all these trials, he attained his sixtieth year, the vital forces functioned strongly thereafter.

To felicitate His Highness at having emerged from the "fatal fifties" more robust than ever, a Committee had been formed early in October to draw up a programme of festivities. Bezonji Merwanji had passed from this "vale of tears" to "that bourne from which no traveller e'er returns." Mr. C. N. Chinoy, B.A., LL.B., Bar-at-Law, of Dhoraji, was therefore elected President. A large fund was collected, Sheth Nurmahomed Ahmed of Gondal heading the list with a subscription of Rs.10,000.

2

On the actual birthday—the 24th—a steady stream of callers poured in and out of the "Huzur Bungalow" wishing the Thakore Sahib many happy returns of

the day. No man was too humble to be received. Shouts of "*Jai! Jai!!*" resounded everywhere.

A visit to the Ashapura Temple followed, after which there was a largely attended tea party at the home of the Railway Auditor, Mr. Dullabhji R. Joshi, and a banquet at the Guest House given by Sheth Nurmahomed Ahmed. Dinner over, the guests went to the residence of the Sheth where they witnessed a fine display of fireworks. On the way home the carriage had to be stopped at almost every step for His Highness to receive offerings of flowers and marks of welcome. Morning was ushered in before he returned to the "Huzur Bungalow."

Function followed function, day after day. One host prayed 61 times to God to shower blessings upon the Ruler. Each time he drew pointed attention to a kindly act he had done, he wished him a hundred years of happiness.

3

Any one who happened to see Gondal on November 3 must have thought himself back in the times of Arabian Nights Entertainments. The city was transformed into fairyland with decorations of every description imaginable and arches bearing tributes to the Ruler.

From every corner of the State men, women and children poured into the capital. It was estimated that at least 12,000 persons came from outside to participate in the rejoicings.

Many prominent guests were there also. They included the Hon'ble Mr. C. C. (afterwards Sir Charles) Watson, the Agent to the Governor-General in the States of Western India and Mrs. Watson; the rulers of many Kathiawar States; and officials and persons in private life, both Europeans and Indians.

The programme followed the usual lines—the distribution of sweets to school children throughout the State, feasting the inmates of public institutions, the poor and the cattle in the *Panjrapoles*; prize distributions; dramatic entertainments; the presentation of addresses; processions by day and by night; garden parties and banquets.

A great procession started from the Durbargarh at 9 a.m. on the morning of November 4. The State banner and kettle-drums were at its head. Little girls carried brass and copper vessels and cocoanuts. Brahmans recited *Ved Mantras* as they marched along. The band, retainers riding on gaily caparisoned horses, mace-bearers, *Bhayats*, *patels*, local notabilities belonging to every community and a vast concourse of Gondal citizens—a stream of loyal and loving persons—poured through the streets to His Highness' residence. As the procession swept past him he—clad, as usual, in plain white muslin—acknowledged the greetings showered upon him.

The doors of the "Huzur Bungalow" were flung wide open to admit villagers, who, like little children unable to control their emotions, rushed in. According to persons on the spot, these simple people were amazed to see the unpretentious style in which their august Ruler lived.

4

A huge *mandap*, had been erected in the grounds of the Grasia College for the presentation of the principal Address. Its 60 arches, decorated with mauve silk, bore, in gold letters embroidered on a green velvet background, laudatory inscriptions such as "long last the life dedicated to a sacred trust;" "Gondal's good thy sole delight;" "patience and perseverance, reason and restraint, thy guiding lights;" "silence and

simplicity, duty and discipline thy crowning glory;" and "lead our Gondal to greater greatness."

The other side of the arches bore Gujarati mottoes. Against the towers of the Grasia College was hung a legend reading: "Gondal greets her patriot Prince."

Silver seats had been arranged in a semi-circle upon a raised dais. In the centre sat the Agent to the Governor-General and next to him, in order of precedence, the visiting rulers of other States.

As soon as the Thakore Sahib arrived, all the Indian rulers present, moved by one impulse, left their chairs and crowded round him, begging him to sit at the Agent to the Governor-General's right hand instead of occupying the chair at the end of the row, as he had chosen to do. The occasion, they insisted, demanded that he should abandon, for once, his habit of avoiding the limelight. But he was firm in his resolve.

When all were again seated, Mr. Chinoy read the Address to their "Great Prince and Selfless Ruler." On that day sixty years ago—he narrated—Gondal's destiny had been "entrusted by Providence to a baby Prince." With an unfailing devotion and sublime self-denial His Highness had given the very best in him to the advancement of his subjects.

Every aspect of the people's well-being, the Address noted, had received his personal attention. As a result, substantial progress had been made in every department and signs of vitality and growth were apparent everywhere.

While hardly out of his 'teens he had begun to promote the prosperity of the peasants—the readiest way, to his mind, of improving the economic life of the villages. His policy of 'light assessment had been a blessing to his favoured *kunbis*—his illustrious ancestor Bha Kumbhoji's "golden trees." "Though there

had been a tendency for a general rise in prices of agricultural products since 1899" and the farmers had "reaped large profits," His Highness, with his usual generosity, had "kept the assessment at the old figure and let them enjoy the full fruits" of their labour. Lakes built by him "watered yearly 11,000 acres of land;" while wells had increased from 2,795 in 1884 to 6,890.

The Address mentioned the abolition of 50 taxes and customs duties; His Highness' achievement as a road and railway builder; the public buildings that had been erected by their Prince who "lived simply yet built grandly, and yet for his own personal comfort no man did toil;" to the introduction of electricity and other improvements.

The railway capital, it was stated, totalled Rs. 81,35,000. The public buildings had absorbed Rs. 2,00,00,000. The value of civil suits had risen from Rs. 1,55,000 to Rs. 2,40,000; detection of crime had improved to 69 per cent instead of 37 per cent. (the figure for 1884). There were 100 more schools and 15,460 as against 3,745 pupils. The total cost of education, which in 1884 was Rs. 10,000, was, in 1925-26 Rs. 2,10,000. The expenditure on medical relief had doubled. The number of Gondlis in State service stood at 95 per cent, whereas it had in 1884 been only 58 per cent. Salaries had increased, in the course of 40 years, by 150 per cent.; while his "modest Civil List" remained stationary.

Like a musical composition that swelled in volume and melody to a deep diapason as the theme developed, the Address continued:

"Great as are Your Highness' merits in the art of administration, greater still are the qualities of person which far more justify the reverential fondness of your people. The whole

tenor of life lived for us for whose interest personal convenience and comfort are subordinated is well known. Your Highness has been many great things in one: the easy accessibility, large and spacious tolerance, calm and balanced temper, capacious mind moving, without haste and without deviation, to deeply considered ends, are indeed a rare combination—fibres which go to mould heroes.

"Your Highness' frugal and patient thrift, wise and cautious financial policy and ceaseless war against personal and public profusion, have secured for the State ample prosperity and an overflowing Treasury. It must be a wonderful strength of mind and some higher faith which makes you so averse to spend on personal comfort or in any regal display: a master of millions was never seen in so simple splendour."

Labouring under great emotion, His Highness assured the "Sons and Daughters of Gondal" that to his mind there could be "no greater or truer happiness for a Ruler than the assurance that he had a place in the hearts of his people." That assurance had been given to him for the third time—firstly on the occasion of the celebration of the semi-jubilee of his assumption of powers; secondly when his 51st birthday was celebrated for a month and a half; and thirdly that day, when they were "surpassing that which in 1915 seemed unsurpassable."

"What better reward can one who lives and labours for you ever have than such demonstrations of love and loyalty?" he asked. "For my part let me tell you, what I hope requires no telling, that the...hold you have on my affection stands unequalled and that your welfare will remain, as it has always been, my chief concern."

He was gratified to learn that they were satisfied with the progress that had been made. Whatever the success of his administration, he attributed it

"...to a great extent to the co-operation of my loyal officers and to a greater extent still to your silent and therefore all the more efficient, support which I shall need more and more as time passes. Viewing the future in the light of the past, I can look with confidence for that support in an increasing measure, specially if you follow the maxim I have cherished all my life, that is—"Gondal above all."

At the close of the function the following concessions were announced:

- (a) Making State service pensionable.
- (b) Remission of half the amount of land assessment to the cultivators, amounting to Rs.7,50,000.
- (c) Grant of four times the scheduled rate of compensation for land acquired for public use in municipal area.
- (d) Remission of royalty for the extraction of earth, sand, metal and *murrām* from State land.
- (e) Remission of fines, penalty and rent from the cultivators of Gomta and Moviya villages for encroachments on Darbar land.
- (f) Writing off Rs.1,00,000 due to the State from the people.
- (g) Present of one month's cash allowance to *dharmada* and *kherati* (religious bequests) grantees.
- (h) Grant of Rs.10,000 for the maintenance of cattle.
- (i) Feasts for six days to the inmates of the Asylum, Orphanage and Jail, and to the poor.
- (j) Donation of Rs.5,000 to the Women's University Settlement Fund, Bombay.

The function ended just as the sun was setting in a flame of golden glory. As the evening shades deepened, myriads of electric lights flashed forth, turning night into day.

The programme was brought to a close with a torch-light procession, the largest Gondal had ever witnessed. Drawn by a pair of milk-white Kathiawari steeds, the State coach containing His Highness, Her Highness, the Princesses Bakunverba and Taraba and the Rani Sahiba of Jubbal; and Miss Henderson, proceeded slowly through the thronged bazaars and streets, stopping at every turn of the wheel for the occupants to be garlanded. It did not reach the "Huzur Bungalow" until dawn began to flush the horizon with a rosy tint.

5

November 5, the last day of the celebrations, was marked by a banquet at the Navlakha Palace, given by the people. In proposing the toast to His Highness, Mr. Watson said:

"A cynic who does not know Gondal might doubt the sincerity of these festivities and might say that such things are easily arranged. No one who was present yesterday at the presentation of the people's Address to His Highness could make this mistake.

"The sincerity of the huge gathering collected to do him honour was beyond dispute and the eloquent phrases of the Address which was presented carry in their facts and figures a complete refutation of doubt. Such facts and figures cannot lie and in the face of them it would be truly amazing if the Thakore Sahib did not possess the affectionate gratitude of his people. It is a record which it would be difficult to equal

in any State or Government; a land assessment which has not been raised during 40 years, so that the tenants have obtained the full results of increased value of agricultural produce; an expenditure of nearly one and one-half crores on improved roads and bridges; educational and medical facilities which are unsurpassed in any Indian State within my knowledge; and with all this a total abolition of all taxation completes a record of measures for the prosperity and advancement of the Gondal people which cannot but deserve their warmest gratitude.

"Even if gratitude be taken on its lowest ground as the expectation of favours to come, it would still be applicable to Gondal. For His Highness is unwearied in devising further measures for his people's increased happiness and prosperity...

"In days when it is sometimes a reproach among the disaffected that Princes administer their States largely in their own interests, the selfless record of His Highness of Gondal is a valuable corrective and example. He has realized in the fullest degree that the highest duty of a Ruler is to be the servant of his people.

"To an exceptional extent he has avoided pomp and ostentation, has found his pleasure in the improvement of the lot of others and has lived laborious days in the interests of his State and people. It is not given to all of us to follow our ideals as closely as His Highness the Thakore Sahib. But we can admire a man who has the strength of mind and will to do better than ourselves."

His Highness' reply was marked with deep feeling rather than by a flow of words.

The *kunbis* of Gomta, eight miles from Gondal, invited His Highness to visit their village on December 17. They had asked 3,000 cultivators from other parts of Gondal and 250 leading *patels* from 25 other Kathiawar States to be present. In all some 8,000 persons participated in the festivities.

Without spending a pie on labour or art to beautify the village, the cultivators decorated the arches built by the local craftsmen with the produce of their fields and their hand-loom. They rigidly barred from the function every item suggestive of modernity and Westernism and strictly adhered to ancient customs.

Instead of a brass band rendering music that was neither Eastern nor Western, the villagers fared forth on the road to meet their Ruler in a procession a mile long, playing pipes, drums and other simple rural instruments that had known little change since the beginning of time. When it reached the village the coach was left and they all walked in the blazing, midday, tropical sun to pay visits.

Seated among the villagers in the *chora* (village temple) His Highness revived *dairo*—the ancient practice of enquiring about the state of affairs from the farmers. Then, sitting on an ordinary *charpai* (cot) he was introduced to the leading cultivators and the outsiders who, though they had nothing to do with Gondal, were as ready to pay homage to the Ruler of that State as if they owed allegiance to him. Formality was totally absent.

The *kunbis* behaved as naturally in the Thakore Sahib's presence as they would have done had he been one of themselves. They approached him as their father or elder brother rather than as their king.

In the afternoon the Thakore Sahib, again sitting on a *charpai* in a *mandap* built and decorated by the

village *mistris*, listened to recitations and speeches and watched *rasas* performed by the peasants. Unaided he made his way through the crowds. Not a single policeman was present to "protect" him or to preserve order. He sat down in a field and partook with relish of the peasant's food prepared by the *kunbi* women.

7

Three months later, on the *Vasant Panchmi* (Spring festival) day, farmers from all over the State congregated at the *Rajwadi* in Gondal to do honour to Bhagvat Sinhjee. His coach was followed by a hundred beautifully decorated carts filled with women and children singing joyous songs. They laid sugar and cocoanuts at his feet and presented him with a miniature cart of fine workmanship in gold and silver, containing tiny models of agricultural implements.

Late in the evening, under a mango tree, the function came to a close with the performance of *rasa* by volunteers from Gomta.

The mango tree was chosen to symbolize Bhagvat Sinhjee's silent service to Gondal. Each year it presented rich gifts of blossoms and fruit, so on each birthday he gave substantial presents to his "dear people." As it yielded ungrudgingly the gift of sweet fruit even to the unfriendly, he sheltered the poor and the destitute.

CHAPTER XXXI

A Gujarati Lexicon

1

The winter's day was spent. The sun had vanished behind a bank of unseasonable clouds. The light was failing fast.

Alighting from the train that had brought me to Gondal from Bombay *via* Viramgam and Rajkot, I crossed the platform and went out to the street. A carriage and pair from the Huzur stables was waiting for me.

After a bath and a cup of tea at the Guest House I expressed the desire to go out and see something of the capital which, I was sure, must have changed considerably during the 22 years that had elapsed since my previous visit.

Gas lamps, I found, had yielded place to electric bulbs. Some of the side streets were broader and better kept. Modernity shyly peeped out of a shop here and there. In front of a stone building at a turn in the road was a petrol pump painted a vivid crimson.

2

As I was returning it occurred to me to take a look at the Durbargarh. As I ascended the broad

stairs and passed the Education Minister's office on the first floor, I saw a figure seated towards the far end of the verandah.

"Who is at work at this late hour?" I asked the official who was kindly showing me about.

"His Highness," was his laconic reply.

"What is His Highness doing at secretariat at this late hour?" I persisted. "I should have thought that the offices would have been closed three or four hours ago."

"You see," the official explained, His Highness does not regulate his life according to the scale of hours laid down by a Labour Union. He considers himself to be the chief servant of the State and is at work morning, noon and night."

Having finished the business of State for the day, Bhagvat Sinhjee had turned his attention to reading proofs of the Gujarati lexicon upon which he has been engaged for a score of years. He took up the task in the first instance because the attempts that had so far been made could not, largely through lack of financial resources and organization, be carried to a point that would give the Gujarati-speaking public a dictionary adequate to their needs.

Kavi (poet) Narmadashankar had done the pioneer work. He had collected 25,268 words. The Gujarati Vernacular Society, Mr. Lallubhai Patel of Nadiad and the Gujarat Vidyapitha, between them, carried it further. The *Sartha Jodai Kosha* published by the last named body, contained 51,595 words.

The idea of compiling a comprehensive lexicon appealed to Bhagvat Sinhjee. He personally collected 20,000 words that had eluded all the other labourers in that field. They were mostly picked up in conversation with villagers and from periodicals, newspapers, books and State documents. Many of them were

colloquialisms. Others were derived from the various *prakrits*—languages of the common people current in ancient times in Upper India, where the Aryans predominated. Others again were technical and scientific terms derived from foreign sources.

His Highness began noting down each word that he suspected had not been included in any other lexicon. Whenever, in the course of conversation, he heard an unusual expression, he would make a memorandum of it, mental, if writing materials were not handy or the occasion was unsuitable for using them.

In this connection an incident narrated to me by an eye-witness is illuminating:

One day, I was told, as the sun was riding at the meridian, a knot of men sat at dinner in a humble peasant's house. Simple fare was set before them—*rotla* (bread made of greyish, coarse grain), some greens and a little pulse, served on salvers. Beside each guest stood a tumbler made of bell-metal from which he occasionally sipped buttermilk.

Presently one of the men stopped eating, thrust his hand into his pocket, took out a stub of a pencil, turned up the edge of his long, white muslin coat and wrote a word or two on it in Gujarati. The others watched him with frank curiosity in their eyes.

The writer—who was none other than Bhagvat Sinhjee—smiled and told his host that he had merely jotted down an unusual word. With that explanation the thread of talk was resumed where it had been left off.

As His Highness has gone about, seeing things for himself, having talks with farmers tilling the fields or driving along the roads in their bullock carts, or with hawkers peddling their wares from hamlet to hamlet, he has promptly committed to paper any term that he knew or thought had not yet been collected.

In reading newspapers, periodicals and books, he has carried on this pursuit with equal avidity.

3

Each morning all the words jotted down the day before or underlined by him are carefully tabulated in alphabetical order. Their meaning and etymology are determined, any local variations in orthography noted and context secured to show the connotation or connotations in which they are used.

One morning the *Vidya Adhikari* (Mr. Chandulal Bahecherlal Patel, B.A.), under whose general superintendence the work of compilation is being carried on, was surprised to receive from "Huzur Bungalow" a number of words neatly copied on a slip of paper instead of the newspaper with words underlined which was usually sent to him. Knowing that the Thakore Sahib would not lightly depart from his regular practice, he was sure that something out of the ordinary had occurred.

By accident he learnt the facts. The words sent to him that morning had been extracted from an article in which a great Indian leader whom the *Vidya Adhikari* revered, had been heartily abused. Consideration for his Education Minister's feelings had led the Thakore Sahib to change the routine on that day.

4

Some 2,00,000 words have been gathered. They relate to all realms of life—mineralogical, botanical, zoological, agricultural, economic, political, social, literary, artistic, scientific, and religious. Words that have not actually become incorporated with Gujarati have not been included merely to swell the bulk of the volume.

Particular care is being taken to trace the etymology of each word, to ensure correct orthography

and to explain whether it is to be employed as a noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, or conjunction, or in more than one form. All variations employed by authors of repute or sanctioned by usage spread over a considerable period are noted.

Equal care is taken to define each word. If it bears more than one connotation, each meaning is explained.

In elucidation of its significance, one or more illustrations are given. Wherever possible the illustrations are culled from works regarded as standard.

When compilation reaches this stage, the slip is submitted to His Highness. He examines all the details and frequently suggests modifications, rigidly excluding ornate language and insisting upon clarity.

No correspondence relating to the compilation of the lexicon is considered too trivial to be brought to his notice. He also freely discusses in person all the suggestions sent in from outside.

5

The *Bhagvadgomandal*, as the dictionary is called, serves, for one thing, to show some of the original contributions made by the Hindus to the world's knowledge.

The book is, therefore, certain to rouse a sense of pride in Gujarati-speaking Indians. It should have a steadying effect upon western-educated young men and women.

The cost of the dictionary has run into Rs. 5,00,000. To place it within the reach of persons of slender means, no profit is to be made from its sale.

CHAPTER XXXII

At Seventy

1

The years have raced on, their feet impelled by joy, or they have dragged their weary way through catastrophes sent down by Nature momentarily enraged at man's perversity. The boy of four who was placed upon the throne from which his father had been suddenly snatched by Yama's relentless hand fondles, in such moments of leisure as he allows himself, great-grandchildren of his own.

In the domestic realm, happiness has been his in a measure that the gods apportion to few mortals. His Rani, reared in the traditions of Rajput *purdah* has, for a generation and more, led the life of an emancipated, cultivated lady and, through constant thought for others, has won the high regard of peeress and peasant woman alike. She has travelled widely and pondered deeply the problems of the age.

2

Their three daughters, grown up without the taint of *purdah*, have garnered wisdom from the West. They have gathered many coveted certificates,—won many prizes and medals. But they walk through life with humility that the *rishis* of old extolled as the most resplendent ornament with which women may deck

herself, whether she dwells in a thatched cottage or in a gilded mansion.

All four sons have reached man's estate. Dada Sahib, the eldest among them, is himself a grandfather and ever ready to relieve his sire of any burden, whether administrative or domestic, from which he may temporarily crave relief.

The three younger sons occupy positions of responsibility in the State—one in the Medical, another in the Public Works Department, and a third in the Railway. Not one of them eats—or wishes to eat—the bread of idleness.

3

In the sphere of public administration, the Thakore Sahib has created a "record"—to use a phrase of the day—that many of his compeers may well envy. By self-denial that would be deemed praiseworthy even in a private individual, and sleepless supervision, he has built up the assets of his State until the income exceeds that of many territories far larger and more populous than his.

He has created for himself the distinction of achieving that end by pursuing a far-sighted policy of rigid economy, instead of levying a single new tax or even increasing the incidence of an old one. He has, on the contrary, the satisfaction of having wiped out at least 50 imposts that pressed unequally upon the people and impeded trade and commerce; and also of having relieved the farmers of the vagaries of a revenue system that delivered them, bound hand and foot, to the tender mercies of ill-paid but powerful officials.

4

The virtual quintupling of the State revenue has not tempted the Ruler to live in grander style, but

has provided him the means to serve his people the better. As he has grown older he has simplified his life, already so severe in its simplicity so as to be a matter of comment among men who confuse a State with an estate. His Civil List remains at the figure it was a half-century back.

5

With improved finances, he, on the contrary, has increased the emoluments of public servants and given them security of tenure that they lacked. He, at the same time, has augmented and improved the forces of law and order and used them to make the way of the transgressor harder and the course of justice speedier and more equitable; and has transformed the face of the State by constructing roads, bridges, irrigation works, railways, telephones, schoolhouses and other public buildings.

His efforts to pull men and women out of the mire of superstition and reaction have been as prodigious as his endeavours to guarantee security of life and property. He has had the wisdom to repose faith in the "rising generation," directing effort particularly to enlightening the minds of the girls—the housewives and mothers of to-morrow—instead of trying to improve adults—already set in their ways.

6

The response evoked by these many-sided efforts has been noteworthy. The towns and even some of the villages are beginning to wear a new aspect; and projects of sanitation, campaigns to fight epidemics and propaganda for social upliftment do not rouse the intense opposition that they once did.

The vastness of the changes effected during the half-century that Bhagvat Sinhjee has been directing

affairs in Gondal can be grasped only when the statistics relating to the year in which he came into power are compared with the latest available figures:

		1884	1934
Civil List	Rs.	1,44,000	1,44,000
Income	Rs.	13,90,585	78,53,816
Average Vighoti	Re.	1-5-1	1-5-1
Produce per Vigha	Rs.	11-0-0	20-0-0
Wells	Nos.	2,250	7,904
Bagayat	Acres	5,590	40,825
Land uncultivated	Acres	1,15,673	12,209
Jirayat	Acres	2,26,550	3,11,634
Famine Relief	Rs.	86,000	57,50,000
Water Works	Rs.	0	20,00,000
Factory	Nos.	2	45
Telephone	Miles	0	300
Taxes	Nos.	50	Nil
Electricity	Rs.	0	30,00,000
Exports	Rs.	1,84,425	11,51,716
Imports	Rs.	23,73,679	20,75,742
Railway Capital	Rs.	27,00,000	1,04,20,602
Public Works	Rs.	1,36,203	27,22,252
Road Length	Miles	60	360
Water Way Length	Feet	4,000	20,000
Bridge Length	Feet	500	5,500
Medical Relief	Nos.	36,000	44,959
Medical Expenditure	Rs.	12,500	27,500
Population	Nos.	1,35,604	2,05,846
Detection of crimes.	Percentage	60	75
Police Expenditure	Rs.	86,815	2,00,365
Chowkies	Nos.	50	250
Suits Disposed	Percentage	50	80
Value of suits	Rs.	1,43,928	5,40,195
Execution			
Application	Percentage	20	90

	1884	1934
Municipal Roads	Miles 3	60
Municipal Area	Sq. Yds. 10,09,600	1,86,73,936
Municipal Expenditure	Rs. 41,378	7,73,457
Students	Girls 332	8,434
	Boys 2,168	11,346
	Total 2,500	19,780
Schools	No. 30	191
Educational Expenditure	Rs. 10,000	1,92,788
Private Charity	Rs. 0	30,045
Personal Charity	Rs. 0	14,08,407

7

Notable though this achievement is, Bhagvat Sinhjee is not content to rest on his oars. Wherever he casts his eye he sees room for improvement. Every department of State activity—of life itself—offers scope for reform.

He is far better fitted to direct the future programme of betterment than ever before. Fifty years of management of State affairs on his own initiative and with undivided responsibility, have given him a rare insight into human nature—a ripe experience of handling men and of dealing with situations as they may arise.

Release from many personal cares has increased his usefulness to his people. His obligations to bring up and to educate his family have all been discharged with conscientious care. Not having acquired any interest for his own gain, nor even a "hobby" to kill time, he can devote his thoughts and energy all the more completely to formulating and executing plans for the advancement of his dearly beloved Gondal.

Progress is all the easier to make since half a century of rule has inspired in his people confidence both in his distinterestedness and his judgment. They, in consequence, have become disposed to assist him in the carrying out of designs he may formulate for their good instead of obstructing him, as they once did, through ignorance.

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He has the added advantage of having built up an efficient administrative machinery that functions smoothly and steadily at the least touch applied by him. The men he has placed at the head of the various departments and those under him, have become used, through long established practice, to his exacting demands for purity of public conduct and zeal for the promotion of the commonweal. They do not need to be told that he will not permit the lowering, by the minutest fraction, of the standards he has laid down in respect of punctuality with which appointments even with the lowliest persons must be kept and promptitude with which official affairs must be transacted, in a manner so methodical as to win the approbation of moderns who have elevated the card-index to the plane of divinity.

Nor can officials, be they august or petty, go far wrong in moments of crisis. His eye is ever on them—be they in the capital or in a village lying upon the margin of the State.

Every morning, he finds upon his desk a chart indicating by an initial, the whereabouts of each touring officer the preceding night. The mighty head of department has to telephone each evening when away from headquarters, with as much punctiliousness as the humblest auditor.

Such a system, no doubt, presses heavily upon the Ruler. What matters it however when he himself insists upon it and his figure remains lithe—his eye undimmed—his energy unflagging—his interest undiminished!

It may therefore be taken for granted that if Bhagvat Sinhjee is given life and strength, the pace of progress will continue to be steadily accelerated in Gondal. At seventy, nothing seems to give him such keen delight as to engage in the effort to beat his own record.



